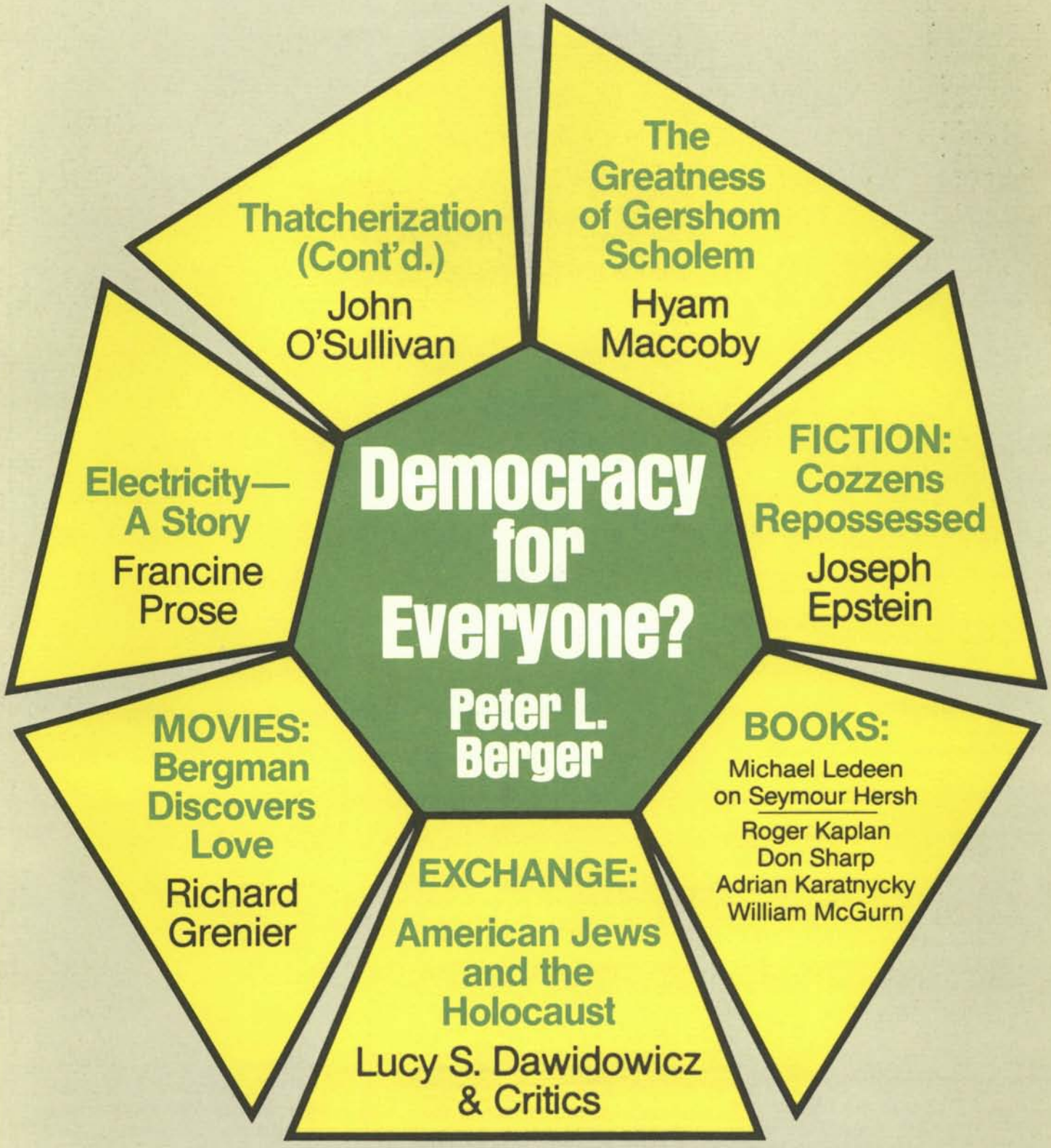
Commentary

Volume Seventy-six, Number Three, September 1983



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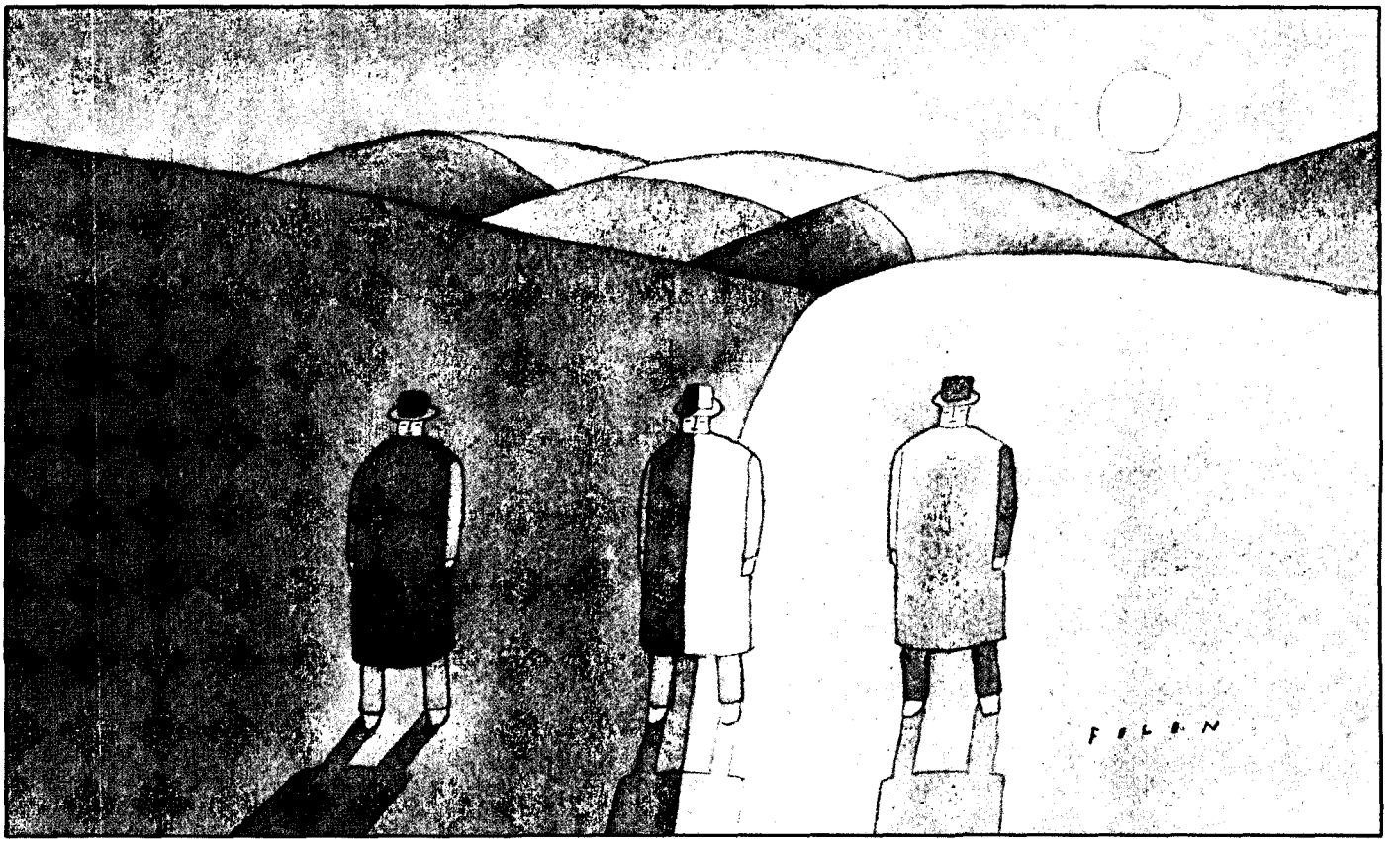
NUCLEAR ELECTRICITY
Who Stands Where



At a time of intense criticism of nuclear-generated electricity, an independent academic study found surprisingly strong support among persons considered well informed on the subject.

The study was part of a large project directed by Professors Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter and sponsored by the Research Institute of International Change at Columbia University, Smith College, and the Graduate Program in Science, Technology, and Public Policy at George Washington University.

A survey of scientists

In mid-1980, little more than a year after the accident at Three Mile Island, a detailed questionnaire on energy issues was sent to a purely random sample of: (1) scientists listed in *American Men and Women of Science,* (2) scientists in energy-related disciplines, and (3) scientists in fields closely related to nuclear energy.

Asked how best to proceed with nuclear energy (see Table 1), an overwhelming majority from all groups felt that the nation should continue with the development of nuclear energy.

Table 1
VIEWS OF SCIENTISTS ON HOW TO PROCEED WITH NUCLEAR ENERGY

Random Sample	Energy Experts	Nuclear Experts	
53%	70%	92%	Proceed rapidly
36	25	8	Proceed slowly
7	4	0	Halt development
3	1	0	Dismantle plants

Most felt we should proceed rapidly.

This high level of support is echoed in Table 2, which notes positive attitudes toward the acceptability of risk posed by nuclear plants; the scientists' personal willingness to have a nuclear plant located where they live; and the scientists' confidence that enough knowledge exists to solve the scien-

Table 2
SCIENTISTS' ATTITUDES ON NUCLEAR ENERGY ISSUES

Random Sample	Energy Experts	Nuclear Experts	
65%	75%	99%	Risks acceptable
69	80	98	Willing to locate nuclear plants in their cities
75	91	100	Enough knowledge to solve nuclear problems

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tific and technical problems posed by nuclear energy.

Expanding the study

Such positive results were somewhat surprising to the researchers. They decided to expand their study. This was a time when public concern was high and the nuclear regulatory environment was toughening considerably, so the researchers wondered whether decision makers in the nuclear field would be as wary of nuclear power plants as the man in the street.

To find out, the researchers mailed questionnaires to top decision makers in seven different categories:

- the nuclear power industry
- the financial community
- the Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- other regulatory agencies involved with nuclear energy
- members of Congress who were involved with nuclear policy
- outside experts (scientists, social scientists and consultants involved with nuclear energy issues)
- groups with professed anti-nuclear views.

The results were again surprising. As Table 3 indicates, outside experts and financiers were as united in their

Table 3
POLICY PREFERENCES ON NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT

Anti-Nuclear Groups	Industry	Financiers	NRC	Other Regulators	Congress	Outside Experts	
0%	93%	94%	65%	54%	40%	69%	Proceed rapidly
0	5	6	35	25	40	26	Proceed slowly
33	2	0	0	8	20	5	Halt development
67	0	0	0	13	0	0	Dismantle plants

support of nuclear energy development as were industry executives. The only significant opposition came from the heads of the anti-nuclear groups. A few members of Congress and some regulators also expressed opposition. (It should be noted that response from Congress was low in number.)

Table 4 reinforces the pattern. Majorities of all decision-making sectors except the anti-nuclear groups believed nuclear plants safe, the risks acceptable, the problems solvable, and they would be willing to live near a reactor.

The questionnaire also sought to learn what potential problems within the industry were considered most serious. Most of the anti-nuclear groups' leaders rated most of the problems as "very serious." None of the problems was considered that serious by a majority of the other decision makers. Only high-level waste disposal was considered very serious by a majority of persons within any of these seven groups.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 has addressed this problem by establishing a procedure and a timetable leading to the safe disposal of nuclear waste. The concept of burying the waste in stable geological formations deep in the earth has been endorsed by the National Academy of Sciences.

Table 4
GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD NUCLEAR ENERGY

Anti-Nuclear Groups	Industry	Financiers	NRC	Other Regulators	Congress	Outside Experts	
100%	2%	0%	4%	37%	25%	12%	Risks unacceptable
0	94	61	72	60	43	74	Very confident we can solve problems
100	2	0	7	28	28	5	Plants unsafe
0	97	83	94	60	53	88	Would live near reactors

What sources can we count on today?

There was more agreement when the leaders were asked which energy sources would make the greatest contributions to our needs by the year 2000. The questionnaire listed 16 possible sources ranging alphabetically from biomass to wind power. As Table 5 illustrates, most groups viewed coal as the primary energy source, followed by oil and then either natural gas, nuclear fission, or conservation. The anti-nuclear groups are the only dissenters, rating conservation as their top choice, solar heat as a major contributor and dismissing nuclear fission altogether. No other group ranks conservation higher than fourth, expects such a significant contribution from solar heat, or writes off nuclear energy altogether.

Table 5
RESOURCES THAT WILL MAKE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR ENERGY NEEDS

Anti-Nuclear Groups	Industry	Financiers	NRC	Other Regulators	Congress	Outside Experts	
58%	96%	78%	94%	75%	91%	95%	Coal
50	57	50	63	84	67	79	Oil
42	44	41	34	48	52	67	Natural gas
0	52	24	28	52	25	33	Nuclear fission
42	1	0	3	12	10	2	Solar heat
100	16	29	19	50	52	38	Conservation

The researchers found it especially surprising that government agencies which frequently have been critical of nuclear energy were nevertheless looking to this resource for a large contribution. In fact, the other regulators' projection precisely matched that of the nuclear power industry.

An ongoing debate

The debate continues over the risks and rewards of nuclear electricity. In the heat of the debate, it's easy to get the impression that almost everyone has turned against nuclear electricity. This study shows that such an impression would be incorrect.

All energy sources have problems—environmental, safety, reliability, cost. Perhaps someday we'll find a perfect energy source, but until then we must provide for America's energy needs with sources we can count on today.

For a full report on the surveys discussed here, send for our free brochure, "Nuclear Electricity—Who Stands Where." Just fill out this coupon and mail it to:
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Commentary

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BON VOYAGE AND SHALOM!

AIR FRANCE

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Letters from Readers

American Jews and the Holocaust

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Adlai Stevenson in an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors said: "The job of an editor is to separate the wheat from the chaff and then print the chaff." This may be overstating the case, but there is a substantial element of truth in the statement.

COMMENTARY's publication of Lucy S. Dawidowicz's article, "Indicting American Jews" [June], without checking the most definitive source, namely myself, proves that all too often editors do what Governor Stevenson sardonically said.

ARTHUR J. GOLDBERG
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As we read "Indicting American Jews" by Lucy S. Dawidowicz, we feel that something more needs to be said regarding the distinguished American who chairs the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust. Whatever problems may have developed in the commission's process, Arthur J. Goldberg is to be commended for agreeing to chair an effort to look honestly at this issue, so potentially painful to America's Jews. He never sought to protect any special interest, even that of the organization of which he is Honorary President, the American Jewish Committee. By his own avowal, no such special interest has attempted to influence him or the commission in its deliberations, which is itself a tribute to those interests and the organizations involved.

His efforts will be remembered as another example of distinguished service in the long and proud career of a leading American Jew.

HOWARD I. FRIEDMAN
President
American Jewish Committee
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Discussing various responses to Hitler's persecution of the Jews and then to the Holocaust, Lucy S. Dawidowicz writes: "Hardly any group or party along the Marxist spectrum—from the Socialists of the Second International to the Stalinists of the Third International and the Trotskyites of the Fourth International to the myriads of sectarian splinters—ever gave a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews."

This is an extraordinary statement. It rests on no presented research or claim to research. It violates every standard of historical scruple. And it is not true.

One wonders, first of all, whether Mrs. Dawidowicz would include in her indictment the Jewish Labor Bund, a section of the Socialist International with a branch in the United States, as one of the groups on the Left that failed to give "a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews."

Since Mrs. Dawidowicz implicated me in her charges, I decided to do a little research of the kind I suspect she did not do. I leave aside the Stalinists; I share no political community with them; let them shift for themselves. But I start with Trotsky's writing about the European Jews and then move somewhat to the Right.

Trotsky in 1937:

> During my youth I rather leaned toward the prognosis that the Jews of different countries would be assimilated and that the Jewish question would disappear in a quasi-automatic fashion. The historical development of the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. (*On the Jewish Question*, New York, 1973, p. 20.)

In 1937 Trotsky also wrote "Thermidor and Anti-Semitism," an article attacking the anti-Semitism of the Stalin regime. I remember the violence with which American liberals and even leading Jewish figures assailed Trotsky for such "paranoid" accusations; I remember that some of us who in our youth admired Trotsky felt that this time he had "gone too far." It took years before his analysis of Stalinist anti-Semitism became common property.

In 1939 Trotsky wrote that "less than 1 percent" of the world's population (the Jews) "can no longer find a place on our planet. . . ." Hitler, he said, has given anti-Semitism "a zoological form, discovering the true language of 'race' and 'blood' in the dog's bark and the pig's grunt. . . ." (Doesn't that sentence call into question Mrs. Dawidowicz's claim that "Nazi rac-

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ism [is] another concept absent from Marxist thinking"?)

Writings such as these—be they good or bad, wise or foolish—would seem to constitute a good deal more than the "passing thought" which, according to Mrs. Dawidowicz, Marxists didn't give to "the fate of European Jews." But wait.

In 1939 Trotsky wrote about "the gigantic dimension of the evil burdening the Jewish people." (Doesn't that sentence call into question Mrs. Dawidowicz's claim that Marxist categories "harbored no rubric for Jews"?) Trotsky continued: "It is possible to imagine without difficulty what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of the future world war. But even without war the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty *the physical extermination of the Jews*" (emphasis in original, *ibid.*, p. 29).

For someone who, since he was a Marxist, supposedly didn't give "a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews," this prediction is, I submit, rather impressive. Which is not to deny that Trotsky remains open to severe criticisms for his narrowly ideological opposition to Zionism, etc.; but at least it seems clear he was giving rather more than "a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews."

It is interesting to compare his response with that of the editors of the Labor Zionist magazine, the *Jewish Frontier*, as remembered by one of them, Marie Syrkin, in the October 1982 *Midstream*. Miss Syrkin writes that in August 1942 she and Hayim Greenberg heard a "bewildering report" that Hitler intended to exterminate the European Jews. "We listened in numb disbelief," writes Miss Syrkin. "But we could not take in what we heard." Miss Syrkin and Greenberg then received a document from the Jewish Socialist Bund (those Marxists again!) in Poland reporting mass gassing of Jews. But the *Frontier* editors could not take this in either, so in what Miss Syrkin calls "a disgraceful compromise" they buried "the fearful report" in the back pages of their September issue.

I cite this not to criticize Marie Syrkin or Hayim Greenberg, since I believe, as I wrote in *A Margin of Hope*, that "to be human meant to be unequipped to grapple with the Holocaust." I bring up Miss Syrkin's recollection to suggest that if we are to show understanding for

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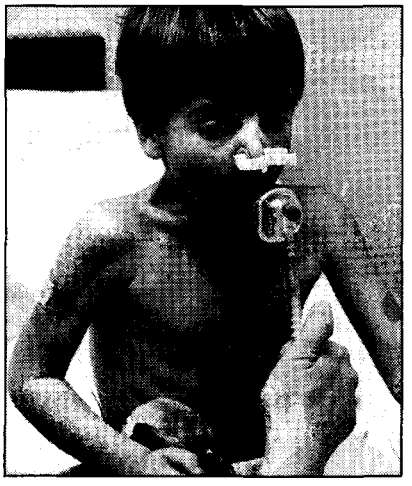

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the failures of the Zionist leaders, as we should, of course, then perhaps Mrs. Dawidowicz might be a little more careful in what she writes about "the Left."

I have reviewed the files, from 1940 to 1949, of the weekly *Labor Action*, published by the Schachtman group which was then beginning its journey from Trotskyism to social democracy. During those years, before and after my service in the U.S. Army, I wrote for this paper. I find that there were in its pages literally dozens of articles, letters, editorials, references regarding "the fate of the European Jews." To cite all or most of them would be impossible; let me mention a few:

June 24, 1940: "Thousands of Jews and foreign political refugees . . . have already been caught by the German troops [in France] and are doomed to certain death. Thousands of other refugees are still being kept in concentration camps . . . and it is feared they will be turned over to Hitler."

December 9, 1940: A headline—"Hitler Pleases Stalin, Hounds French Jews as 'Trotskyists.'"

February 3, 1941: Concentration-camp inmates in France "will not fight any more; apathetic, they lie on their straw mattresses . . . waiting for the end. The camp at Gurs . . . includes the entire former Jewish population of Baden (7,500). . . ."

April 5, 1941: Irving Howe article, "The *Saturday Evening Post* Slanders the Jewish People."

May 25, 1942: Lengthy report on Warsaw ghetto: "The prevailing elements in ghetto life are misery and hunger. . . . Hundreds of people die daily. . . . Even the sacredness of death is lost in the ghetto."

June 14, 1943: Report on suicide of Arthur Zygelbojm to draw attention to plight of Polish Jews.

August 9, 1943: Editorial—"The Allied powers are practicing a form of anti-Semitism in their adamant refusal to take a single positive action in behalf of the European Jews."

October 5, 1943: J. Kaaren attacks British government for indifference to Jewish refugees.

September 13, 1943: Robert Hart writes, "Palestine alone could have provided a haven to countless numbers of European Jews. . . . But the British government refused to modify the tight immigration quotas. The British say it would cause trouble with the Arabs."

February 7, 1944: Headline—"No Let-Up in Nazi Torture of Jews." Subhead—"Open Doors to Nazi Victims."

February 28, 1944: J. Kaaren writes, "Palestine is the only country that welcomes the Jewish refugees and is the only place where the Jewish community makes provisions to integrate them into its national life. It is ridiculous to say that after the war the European Jews can go back to their native lands."

August 6, 1946: Irving Howe article, "Terror—the Barbaric Master of Europe," effort to understand nature of Nazi terror.

August 16, 1946: Headline—"Do Not Let Britain Finish Hitler's Task," over article supporting Haganah against British attempt to ban "illegal" immigration to Palestine.

September 9, 1946: A. Rudzienski writes about reappearance of anti-Semitism in Poland.

May 26, 1948: Editorial—"Open U.S. Doors to Immigration of Jewish People."

All through the late 40's *Labor Action* carried further articles concerning these themes—though not enough of them. Black on white, wise or foolish, wise and foolish, they are there for anyone to look up. I haven't gone through the files of the *Socialist Call*, the weekly paper of the Socialist party, but I am certain that a check would yield similar results. Harry Fleischman, at the time an SP leader, has provided me with clippings from the 1940's. Norman Thomas, December 8, 1944: "From 1939 we and our government did amazingly little even to try to rescue [Jewish refugees]." Norman Thomas, October 22, 1945: "It is rank hypocrisy . . . for President Truman to urge Britain to allow 100,000 Jews into Palestine while refusing to open the doors of the United States to Europe's homeless Jews."

Let me be clear. The Socialist Left, like (I would say) every other group on the political spectrum, should have done and said more than it did about the European Jews. As I have already said in print, a large portion of what the Socialist Left did say was rigid, sectarian, doctrinaire, and quite indefensible. Some of it now seems to me stupid. Yet a portion of the Left's criticisms—of Roosevelt's treatment of the refugees, of the Allies' callousness toward European Jews, of Stalin's anti-Semitism—remains valid.

I am not raising here the issue of whether the Left was correct in its attitudes toward the war, Zionism, the Jewish question, Nazism, etc. COMMENTARY isn't my idea of the place in which to discuss such matters dispassionately. The issue that concerns me is Mrs. Dawidowicz's statement that the Left hardly "ever gave a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews," which is to say, that the Left was indifferent to their fate. The evidence shows that she has committed a slander.

How various schools of thought responded to the Holocaust and the events leading to it is a question both complex and painful. It needs to be treated sensitively, without polemical coarseness. There are enough failures and mistakes to go around, and I think that we Socialists have not been among the last to acknowledge the magnitude of our failures and mistakes. But this is not a question to be approached through narrow-spirited hatchet jobs. Least of all did one expect a historian like Lucy S. Dawidowicz to join the pack.

IRVING HOWE

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her otherwise brilliant article Lucy S. Dawidowicz makes an unfortunate and damaging slip in discussing "the failure of the Left in the United States" to take due cognizance of the Holocaust.

While Mrs. Dawidowicz is properly critical of a major portion of the Left, she is in error in several respects. When she states that "The Socialists . . . opposed American entry into" World War II, she generalizes too broadly. A large segment of the party favored entry, and indeed a serious split occurred over this issue. Furthermore, I fail to find evidence that Norman Thomas, the Socialist leader, was a "member of America First." He did, to his later regret, speak at one or more of the organization's meetings, but that is a far cry from membership.

Even worse, much worse, is the impression given by Mrs. Dawidowicz that Socialists in the United States, whom she had included in

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the Left, are *today* part and parcel of the "heartland of anti-Zionism," and that the Left "bays loudly against 'the Jewish establishment' for having 'betrayed' the European Jews during the Holocaust." In fact, as the most elementary research would indicate, the American Socialists, and particularly their Social Democractic wing, are now and have for some years been strongly, indeed militantly, pro-Israel and actively sympathetic to the Jewish cause generally.

CHARLES COGEN
American Federation of Teachers
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz has been a wise and thoughtful historian of the Holocaust. But her attack on American Socialists in her article, "Indicting American Jews," is a shabby, unworthy, factually false charge.

She claims that "hardly any group or party along the Marxist spectrum . . . ever gave a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews." As far as the Socialist party is concerned, her indictment is a complete lie and a libel. I was active in the Socialist party all during those years, served as its national secretary from 1942 to 1950, and can testify to the facts.

Before the fall of France in 1940, Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate for President, proposed that America should assume the responsibility, with such help as it could get from other nations, for care of the growing number of refugees. He outlined a plan and showed how comparatively modest would be its costs. Roosevelt replied that the plea touched "a most responsive chord in me" and pledged that the government would both study and give immediate attention to the whole problem. But little happened. For the most part, Thomas's proposals were either ignored or opposed, leading him to say bitterly, "I learned first-hand how many Americans preferred to fight or have their countrymen fight for the rights of Jews in Europe than to give them asylum in America."

Again, when Hitler announced that he planned to exterminate all the Jews, men, women and children, Thomas pleaded with Roosevelt to open America's doors. However, at the Anglo-American Bermuda Refugee Conference in 1943, the United States refused to relax its immigration laws and Britain refused to permit Jewish children to enter Palestine. Norman Thomas again commented:

> We are willing to fight Hitler, partly because of his anti-Semitic cruelty, but we have not been willing to take any bold and aggressive action to rescue Jewish refugees or even temporarily to modify our immigration laws in this historic land of asylum. Anti-Semitism is a barometer which measures pretty accurately the climate of democracy and peace.

Even after the war ended, American Socialists continued their concern for the fate of Europe's Jews. In September 1947, the Socialist paper, the *Call*, condemned the British Labor government for the "heartless British policy of deporting four boatloads of Jewish displaced persons from Palestine to Hamburg, scene of Nazi atrocities, and land of horrible memories for these displaced Jews." We urged British Labor "to keep faith with the unfortunate victims of Nazism by removing them from the concentration camps and permitting them to enter Palestine, or any other place of refuge." While calling upon the Labor government to "repeal completely, in accord with its repeated pledges, the provisions of the White Paper of 1939 which provided for discriminatory limitations of Jewish immigration and land acquisition," we also called upon the United States "to relax its own immigration laws along the lines of the Stratton bill and to break down immigration barriers throughout the entire world to enable the displaced of all national, racial, and religious groups to find homes in which they can rebuild their lives in security and freedom."

I have not even mentioned the tremendous work that American Socialists did in such organizations as the Jewish Labor Committee and the International Rescue Committee to rescue Jews, Socialists, and others from the clutches of Hitler.

Lucy S. Dawidowicz should be thoroughly ashamed of the hatchet job she has perpetrated against American Socialism, and I hope she's big enough to apologize for her canards.

HARRY FLEISCHMAN
Wantagh, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz, in defending American Jews against charges leveled by the former Irgunists Peter Bergson and Samuel Merlin, makes an unwarranted equation between the attitudes of today's New Left and those of the old anti-Stalinist, Socialist Left toward the Jews. She also incorrectly attributes the latter's . . . antiwar position to indifference to the fate of European Jews, which is just as unfair as attributing it to indifference to the brutal Nazi crushing of European workers and Socialist movements, anti-Nazis in general, and conquered nations. Both attributions are false.

Attitudes growing out of the antiwar traditions of World War I were the decisive . . . factors. These succeeded in overwhelming common sense and forcing most individuals who adhered formally to official policy to be secret Marranos, to cheer privately for Allied victory but publicly avoid taking what was labeled a "social patriotic" position. This was reflected in our behavior as good soldiers in the army. . . .

In the case of Norman Thomas, it was the tradition of post-World War I pacifism that led him into coalition with America Firsters—not indifference to Nazi terror and murder. Incidentally, vey few Socialists followed him into this coalition.

Mrs. Dawidowicz's citing of the record is partial and hence misleading. Joseph Nedava, a Zionist Revisionist historian, notes in his book, *Trotsky and the Jews*, that "In light of the intensified Nazi persecution of the Jews in 1938, Trotsky called upon the Fourth International to concentrate more energetically on this aspect of the political front." Nedava quotes from the program of the Fourth International which enjoins an uncompromising struggle against "malignant" anti-Semitism and directs that this "should become part of the daily work of all sections of the Fourth International." So much for Mrs. Dawidowicz's charge that Marxist categories "harbored no rubric for the Jews."

In the fall of 1938 Trotsky (murdered in 1940) worried that "between the Warta and the Volga there live seven million Jews—in the coming war *they will be annihilated first*." Even without war, the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty "*the physical extermination of the Jews.*" His remedy in the 30's was "direct physical resistance to the Fascist gangs." In the United States this

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produced the organization of an "Anti-Fascist Labor Guard" to fight physically against the Nazi Bund, the Silver Shirts, and Father Coughlin's followers. Unfortunately, this correct approach was not carried over to the international arena, due to the imprisoning influence of anti-imperialist World War I slogans. Stunted error but not indifference.

E. FINDLEY

Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A writer is supposed to be happy if the critics just spell his name right, so I should be pleased with Lucy S. Dawidowicz's article. Unfortunately, that is all she got right, either about my book, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators,* or the larger topic, the role of the Jewish establishment in the Holocaust.

Her main targets are Samuel Merlin and Peter Bergson whom, she says, we leftists have "welcomed." While I respect them as individuals, ideologically they have nothing in common with my independent Trotskyism. She links us to try to discredit us all via "guilt by association." The same must be said of her further attack:

> In his preface Brenner asserts that "the Palestinian people are deeply appreciative of the firm support given them by progressive Jews." Among the six he cites are Elmer Berger, long-time executive of the American Council for Judaism, and Felicia Langer, an Israeli Communist lawyer who has represented PLO terrorists. In his text, Brenner has good words for two other Jews—Peter Bergson and Samuel Merlin—and says of them and the Irgun that they "did more than all other Zionists to help the Jews in occupied Europe." (He does not say what it is they did.)

The preface cites the six to show the ideological spectrum among Jews who support the Palestinians. None is mentioned in the text, nor is the American Council for Judaism, and the Stalinists of that day are frequently criticized. Mrs. Dawidowicz drags Berger and Langer into the discussion to divert attention from the role of the Jewish establishment. She then artfully creates a false impression that Bergson and Merlin and the Irgun are the only Jews that I praised in the text. But I praised several—Emanuel Ringelblum, Mordecai Anielewicz, Hannah Szenes, Rabbi Michael Weissmandel, Bernard Goldstein, etc. I praised *and severely criticized* Bergson and Merlin. I even cited Merlin as among those Zionist-Revisionists who "admired" Mussolini—10 percent of the book is devoted to proving the fascist character of the movement—and I'm utterly hostile to the Irgun in Palestine. Readers may see for themselves:

> The American Irgunists were to commit many worse mistakes when the Irgun began its revolt in Palestine in January 1944 . . . it diverted attention from the Jews of Europe to the Jews of Palestine . . . once the Irgun revolted, the committee started back down its own road to political fanaticism. . . . That the American Irgunists did more than all other Zionists to help the Jews in occupied Europe is clear. That Begin's revolt did absolutely nothing to help those same Jews is also clear. . . . As it was, the cause of Palestine was once again a distraction.

Grudgingly, she concedes that the Irgunists "succeeded in raising the level of public awareness." They did this via a Kurt Weill pageant, which they toured around the country in the teeth of savage opposition from the American Jewish Congress, which blocked it from being shown in several cities.

She claims I echo "the Soviet-Arab line about 'Zionist collusion with the Fascists and the Nazis.'" Of 607 citations in the book, nine are from Stalinist sources and two are Arab. Since I seek to convince Jews, the bulk of my evidence comes from Zionist sources. I criticize the Stalinists, I condemn the Mufti as a collaborator. Her charge is vintage red-baiting, nothing more. In fact, one of my sources was Lucy S. Dawidowicz. In her *Holocaust Reader,* we find a June 1933 letter from the German Zionist Federation to the Hitlerites:

> Zionism believes that a rebirth of national life, such as is occurring in German life . . . must also take place in the Jewish national group. . . . On the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race, we wish so to fit our community . . . we do not wish to falsify these fundamentals, because we, too, are against mixed marriage and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group. . . . Zionism hopes to be able to win the collaboration even of a government fundamentally hostile to Jews.

Mrs. Dawidowicz is correct about only one thing: the Left will use Zionism's Holocaust record against it. I ask her straight out: didn't the World Zionist Organization break the anti-Nazi boycott; didn't the Haganah invite Eichmann to Palestine and offer to spy for the SS; didn't Foreign Minister Shamir's Stern Gang offer to go to war on Hitler's side? She calls my book "pseudo-scholarly." Good enough; if she fancies that she can expose me, she is welcome to try: in a debate, at Yeshiva University or any other school.

LENNI BRENNER

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is rather troubling to read the article by Lucy S. Dawidowicz in which the American Council for Judaism is impugned, as is its founder, Lessing Rosenwald, both directly and also by association with anti-Semites, racists, and self-haters.

Mrs. Dawidowicz implies that the Council's actions in its early days in the 1940's were only political. The fact is that its motivation was eminently religious—it sought to protect the practice of Judaism in the apolitical and universalistic form which has been the most widely loved in America since our faith became strongly established here. She might also have mentioned that most leading Reform rabbis participated in the work of the Council. The author says the Council was a minuscule group. In fact, it was many, many times the size of the American Jewish Committee, although the Committee is now larger.

Mrs. Dawidowicz links Lessing Rosenwald's name with America First. She does not add (I hesitate to say "deliberately withholds") the fact that upon learning of anti-Semitism within America First, he resigned, openly and forcefully condemning the group, which had originally been formed for patriotic purposes. It should also be mentioned that Lessing Rosenwald's record of helping Jews and serving Jewish interests has been noted by other historians either better informed or less inclined to polemics than is Mrs. Dawidowicz, and also by American statesmen.

. . . Mrs. Dawidowicz implies that the Council's politics were extremist—Trotskyist, Communist, and common-variety terrorist. Actually, it is unlikely that any Jewish group in America was better represented at that time (or is today, for that

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matter) in the camp of moderate politics.

Mrs. Dawidowicz refers to Rabbi Elmer Berger, an executive director, without mentioning that he has not been associated in any way with our organization since 1968. Indicating his connection while omitting the names of those who have in fact represented the American Council for Judaism, including Clarence L. Coleman, Jr., its president since 1955 almost uninterruptedly, is a distortion of gross proportions.

MARCIA FRIEDMAN
Director, American Council
for Judaism
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When Winston Churchill, on July 22, 1942, finally said no to the opening of the Second Front in France in September 1942, Commanding General Dwight D. Eisenhower thought that date "could well go down as the 'blackest day in history,'" as Captain Harry C. Butcher, Eisenhower's naval aide, recorded in his diary, published as *My Three Years with Eisenhower*. Yet Lucy S. Dawidowicz, in her otherwise incisively informative article, scorns the campaign to "Open Up the Second Front Now" as merely a Soviet machination.

Now the June 11, 1942 agreement signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Soviet Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov called for a Second Front in France in 1942. Hitler had already begun his systematic extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe, as Mrs. Dawidowicz again reports. There were very good *military* reasons for adhering to the agreement, for a cross-channel invasion would have lifted the pressure on the Russians, against whom the Germans launched a new offensive on June 28, 1942. Compelling Hitler to fight on two fronts could have shortened the war and thus saved lives (including Jewish ones). Not only the White House but the highest military authorities were all for it. But Churchill, having other postwar strategic ends in view, was opposed. A mission headed by General George C. Marshall and Admiral Ernest King went to London to try to persuade him to abide by the agreement and mount an offensive in France by the end of September 1942. For the war as a whole, Churchill's veto was a setback. For the Jews it was a catastrophe. When Churchill also failed to deliver on his promise to open a front in France in 1943, the fate of millions of Jews was sealed, for in that year Hitler carried through most of his extermination program for Jews. Not until June 6, 1944 was the offensive in France begun.

Now Mrs. Dawidowicz recognizes that ". . . as a group, Jews had the greatest stake in winning the war as fast as possible. For that was the surest way to save the European Jews." Why, then, does she dismiss the cry to open up the Second Front as merely "Millions for defense of the Soviet Union, but nothing for rescue of the European Jews"? A Second Front in September 1942 would have helped not only the Soviet Union but the whole Grand Alliance, and all the peoples of Europe, including and particularly the Jews of Europe. Here was a prime instance of the complete integration of saving Jews with winning the war—thus forestalling the State Department's objection to plans to save Jews as interfering with the war effort. Can it be that Mrs. Dawidowicz's tunnel-vision anti-Communism prevents her from seeing that, whatever other motivation or other beneficiaries, the opening of the Second Front in France in the fall of 1942 could have saved . . . more Jews in fact than all the pleas and plans advanced by any and all who advanced them?

It is bad enough that we who demonstrated in 1942 and 1943 for the opening of the Second Front in France were denounced as merely Soviet-inspired. But that forty years later a historian like Lucy S. Dawidowicz can merely repeat that view is a reflection on her historiography.

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES
Editor, *Jewish Currents*
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have no quarrel with Lucy S. Dawidowicz's defense of American Jews during the years of the Holocaust, or with her response to the raucous American Irgunists; but . . . she occasionally raises my hackles. She asks rhetorically whether the United States should be reviled and repudiated because of its restrictive immigration policies and the "mean-spiritedness of consular officials." American Jews should ponder where they would be if America had not won the war, she cautions. . . .

. . . Five years ago David S. Wyman in these pages ["Why Ausch-

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witz Was Never Bombed," May 1978] carefully catalogued America's role in refusing to bomb the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz, using the pretext that it would interfere with the primary goal of winning the war. John Pehle, director of the War Refugee Board, . . . was incredulously mouthing this official line even in the face of rescue operations which had already been conducted by the U.S. and its allies on behalf of non-Jews and which were completely separate from the primary war effort. Pehle, it seems, never extended himself to save European Jews until November 1944, when reports of those who had escaped Auschwitz were flooding his War Refugee Board, though the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and War, all members of the Board, had been aware of the situation at least six months earlier. An alarmed Pehle finally moved into action, forwarding a strong request to the War Department to bomb Auschwitz. The request was turned down again, of course, for the same reason; but by then it didn't make much difference, since in December Himmler was already destroying the gassing facilities, and in January the Russians liberated the camp. . . .

From May to December 1944, Jews were dying at such a rate in Auschwitz that even one day's diversion of a few dozen planes from the main war effort could have saved tens of thousands at this camp alone. But let's not lay the blame only on John Pehle. The massacre of Jews has always been viewed as a natural disaster, like a flood or earthquake. . . .

STANLEY P. KESSEL
Hollywood, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The thrust of Lucy S. Dawidowicz's article is that the creation of a Jewish commission on the Holocaust is an example of indulging in the macabre "penchant for self-castigation." As the alleged "chief architect of the commission's inquiry," I am somehow identified with the anti-Semitism of the Left.

These are grave accusations, bordering on slander. Mrs. Dawidowicz, however, does not support them with anything close to reasonable standards of evidence. Rather, the malice that oozes from virtually every paragraph of her article suggests that she herself is guilty of groundless hatred toward some fellow Jews for the sole reason that they have a different view from hers of the role played by the American Jewish leadership during the Holocaust.

Because of limitations of space I must confine myself to only a small sample of her distortions and statements which are in crass contradiction of the truth.

1. Nowhere in her article does Mrs. Dawidowicz say that she read my draft of the commission's report, yet she criticizes it. Though she writes that it was "picked apart," revised, and edited, she is not inhibited from stating: "On June 2, 1982 the commission met to consider *Merlin's typescript*" (emphasis added). This simply never happened. My "typescript" was never distributed among the members of the commission. What they received and discussed on June 2 was a text twice removed from mine—edited and reedited not by one person, but by two or three. On the one hand Mrs. Dawidowicz wants the satisfaction of telling how my draft was "picked apart" by a group of professors, specialists in the field (which is not true); on the other hand she wishes to show that "despite the editing, the report was in essence a reiteration of the old Irgun attacks on the mainstream Zionist movement and American Jewish organizations, and an effort to insure the Irgun's place as the sole defender of the Jewish people in its darkest hour."

This, she thinks, was my double aim to be achieved through the commission.

The "typescript" does not bear this out. The Irgun, the Bergson group, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe are not even mentioned in my draft. On the contrary, I excluded them. In the chapter where I discuss the structure, the nature, the policies and activities of the various Jewish organizations in this country I have the following paragaph:

> What is referred to as the "Bergson group," all of them Palestinians, is a case apart for many reasons, notably that: (a) they were outsiders and had no interest in internal Jewish affairs in this country; they had no intention of becoming a part of the Jewish establishment; and (b) they operated within the framework of a nonsectarian organization whose composition was almost exclusively American and substantially non-Jewish.

2. Mrs. Dawidowicz attacks me and devastatingly criticizes my draft for the report, but *never* quotes it except once to prove that it had singled out the Jews of America and proclaimed them guilty. She says of my alleged draft:

> The thesis [of the report], in brief, was that the European Jews could have been saved, had not the "Jewish establishment" interfered with the efforts of the Irgunists to do so. Thus on page 25, . . . the report stated that "the leadership of major Jewish organizations . . . knew enough to act or rather counteract, had there been enough compassion and a will."

Let us see what that paragraph really says:

> The governments of the democratic nations and the USSR, the international organizations of great prestige and moral power like the Vatican, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the leadership of major Jewish organizations did not need, in the late 30's and all through the war years, to read Wyman, Braham, Laqueur, Gilbert, *et al.* to become informed of what was happening. They knew enough to act or rather counteract, had there been enough compassion and will.

3. Mrs. Dawidowicz is scandalized by the fact that I accepted the assignment to write the commission's report. "Usually," she pontificates, "a person who has been personally involved in events under investigation is expected to disqualify himself as a judge." I was no judge, if for no other reason than that I was not a member of the commission. Nor was the commission a tribunal. In my draft for an introduction to the report, I explained the purpose of the undertaking:

> . . . members of the commission were fully aware that they were not sitting as a court making final judgments. They anticipate that this report may be the object of adverse criticism. . . . Its main goal will be achieved . . . [if] the taboo and immunity which shielded the policy and behavior of the Jewish leadership from scientific and public scrutiny will have been removed. . . .

4. I believe that the Holocaust was a result of a convergence of circumstances within a specific historic context. The historical factors, conditions, circumstances, and *dramatis personae* have been described

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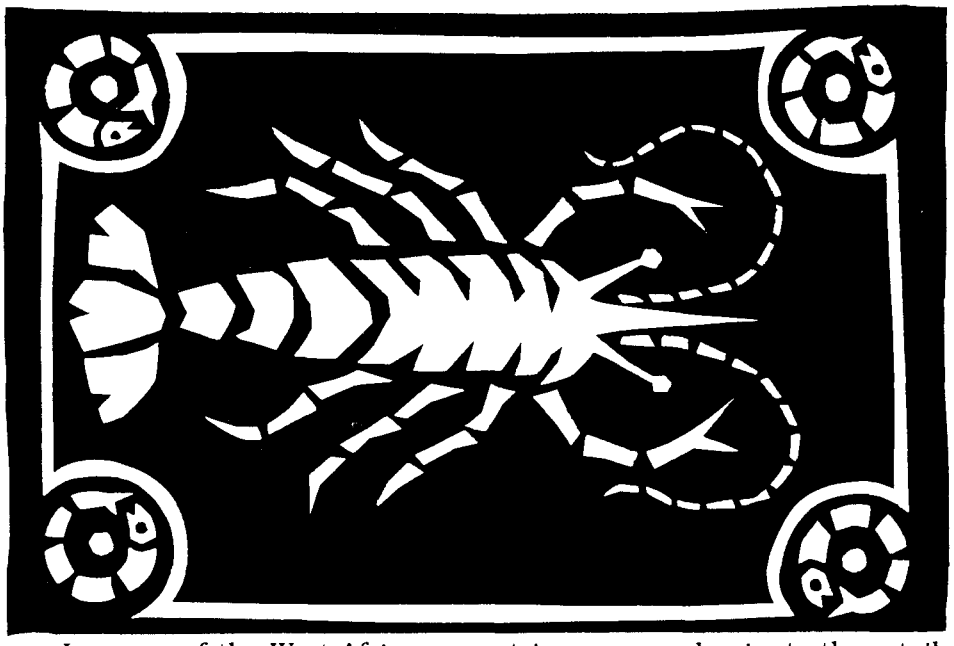

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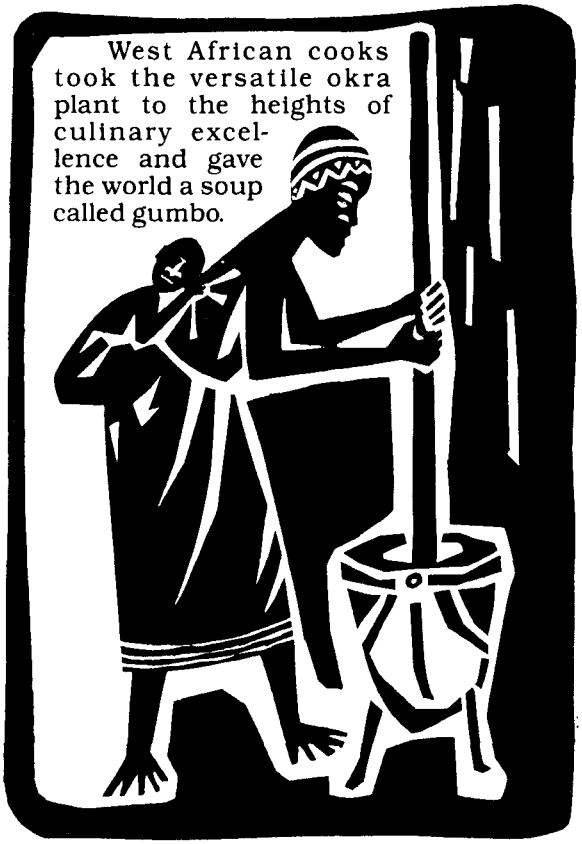

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in hundreds of books. Yet there is one missing link: the Jews in the free countries. They were not outside that specific historic context, they were part of it—regardless of how small a part. The question of their responsibility for the catastrophe is a legitimate one for historical inquiry. To say this is not to indulge in groundless hatred.

Mrs. Dawidowicz, however, does not think so. She says:

> Although he [Merlin] no longer has the same policies he did then [in the 1940's during the Holocaust], having apparently moved leftward on questions concerning Israel and the Arabs, he still retains undiminished a forty-year-old hostility to the mainstream Zionist movement and to American Jewish communal institutions.

I take it that "hostility" is a synonym for "hatred." But these are vague words unless they are used in the context of concrete examples. Let me offer one.

During this period, Nahum Goldmann of the World Jewish Congress regularly asked to meet with officials of the State Department. We have the official records of these meetings. Frequently, he discussed with them what steps could be taken against the enemy. But incredible as it may sound, the enemy in question was not Hitler; it was Peter Bergson. One such meeting was held on May 19, 1944; according to the record Goldmann said "that the activities of Bergson and his colleagues had been a matter of the greatest concern to the official Zionist leadership and that it distressed him to see Bergson received in high places and given facilities by this government."

At this meeting Goldmann expatiated on the pernicious and fraudulent character of the Bergson group; he emphasized the harm being caused by the close relations between Bergson and the diretcor of the War Refugee Board, John Pehle. He stated, according to the record, "that he could not see why the government did not either *deport* Bergson or *draft* him." But why? Goldmann told the State Deparment bureaucrats that Rabbi Stephen Wise gave the answer in a conversation with Pehle: "He [Rabbi Wise] regarded Bergson *as equally as great an enemy of the Jewish people as Hitler*, for the reason that his activities could only lead to increased anti-Semitism" (emphasis added).

This is hatred.

Did I hate these people? Do I hate them now? The reader is free to believe me or not, but I never hated the leaders of the Jewish or Zionist organizations. I was sad, infinitely sad, not for me or our group, but for what preoccupied these people at a time of total disaster for their kin in Europe. I couldn't understand what caused this fury of hatred, and why it took on such irrational proportions. I still don't, as I don't understand the irrationality of a Lucy Dawidowicz after the event.

I have cited only one example. But one has to understand it against the background of an incessant barrage of condemnations, vilifications, denuciations, and character assassination carried on for years against Bergson and his colleagues by the leadership of the Zionist and Jewish organizations.

It is worthwhile to note that we never permitted ourselves to be provoked. Out of respect for the Jewish community and its dignity we did not wish to enter into polemics of that sort. One may ransack all the archives in this country or anywhere else, and not find a *single* instance of a disparaging or offending document prepared by us against any Jewish organization or its leadershp.

The method I applied in writing my draft for the report was analytical and conceptual. The thrust of my paper was not to prove what the Jewish leaders, or some of them, did or failed to do, but rather to attempt to explain why they behaved in a certain way and not differently. The central theme of my draft dealt with certain "fatal misconceptions" which were a major cause of the Jewish leadership's confusion and frustrations, and prevented the leaders from undertaking certain initiatives which might have saved lives. One need not agree with my analytical approach, but in its essence it does not contain hostility.

5. Mrs. Dawidowicz accuses me of claiming credit for things done by others: for instance, that the Madison Square Garden Rally on March 1, 1943 came about only under pressure from the Irgun. I don't remember having said this in Laurence Jarvik's film, *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?*, but if I did, it is true. There is conclusive evidence that it is not a falsehood.

In the official minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee of the American Jewish Congress, held on December 29, 1942, we read: "The matter of holding a Madison Square Garden meeting was revived, in view of the information that the Jewish Army Committee is planning a similar meeting. [But] . . . no final decision was reached."

Another meeting was then held and a decision was taken, but again nothing happened. David Deutsch, whose syndicated column "Heard in the Lobbies" appeared in numerous Anglo-Jewish weeklies, wrote on February 12, 1943:

> . . . [Ben] Hecht is now hard at work trying to arrange a huge demonstration at Madison Square Garden.... What accounted for the mysterious disappearance of the "great demonstration" which was to have been held at the same Garden under the auspices of the American Jewish Congress, Church Peace Union, CIO, and AFL? The date was February 4th and the advance publicity was generous, but if you went there that night you saw a basketball game.

Something did indeed happen which forced the leadership of the American Jewish Congress and other Jewish organizations (not "all," as Mrs. Dawidowicz claims) to take the bull by the horns. On January 26, 1943, Ben Hecht had personally invited about thirty leading Jewish personalities to discuss "the organization of an all-Jewish mass demonstration at Madison Square Garden" and to do it as a joint undertaking by all major Jewish organizations. About twenty-five representatives showed up for the discussion, but the vast majority rejected not the idea of the demonstration but the proposal that it be a joint venture.

The historian David S. Wyman has described the sequence of events very tellingly:

> . . . Fear now arose that the Bergsonites would move into the vacuum and seize the leadership of the flagging effort of rescue. The lethargy of the previous several weeks rapidly dissolved. Apprised of the army committee's plan to hold a demonstration at Madison Square Garden on March 9, Wise and the American Jewish Congress quickly decided to schedule a March 1st meeting at the same location.

This mass rally, though it has since become almost canonized in Holocaust historiography, would

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not merit such an extensive explanation if it were not for the fact that the importance of our group has to be evaluated not only by what we did directly with the help and close cooperation of the American organizations we inspired, but also to a large extent by what the Jewish organizations did under the impact of our activities.

6. A more serious accusation is that our group took credit for the creation of the War Refugee Board (WRB). In her article Mrs. Dawidowicz rehashes the story of how Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau went to President Roosevelt on January 16, 1944, presented him with a memorandum entitled "Personal Report to the President," and in a jiffy the President did what his Treasury Secretary asked him, issuing an executive order establishing the WRB.

However, she cannot ignore the congressional rescue resolution introduced in both the House and the Senate thanks to the activities of our group, an awkward factor she has somehow to explain away: She writes:

> Two months earlier, the Irgunists had used their contacts in Congress to introduce a resolution urging the President to create a "commission of diplomatic, economic, and military experts to formulate and effectuate a plan of immediate action designed to save the surviving Jewish people of Europe." *Exploiting the coincidence in timing*, the Irgunists now falsely claimed credit for the creation of the War Refugee Board [emphasis added].

It seems to me the most efficient way of refuting this accusation is to go to the source, the transcript of the hearings on House Resolutions 350 and 352, 78th Congress, 1st session on the "Establishment of a Commission to Effectuate the Rescue of the Jewish People of Europe." The editor of the volume containing the official transcipt says in his introduction:

> As the horrifying details of the "Final Solution" became known, Jewish organizations in the U.S. strove to come to grips with the unfavorable atmosphere toward efforts at rescue. The established Jewish leadership of the country, however, as represented by Rabbi Stephen Wise, leader of the American Jewish Conference, was reluctant to antagonize the Roosevelt administration, which had no desire to come into conflict with the quite vocal and influential anti-alien camp. . . .
>
> Two Palestinian Jews, Peter Bergson and Samuel Merlin, members of a dissident terrorist organization which had been carrying on an armed struggle in Palestine against British restrictions on immigration, organized a number of public committees throughout the U.S. Their vigorous propaganda campaign succeeded in attracting the support of a large number of Senators, Representatives, university professors, and public personalities by the end of 1943.
>
> It was this pressure which resulted in House Resolutions 350 and 352 and led to the congressional hearings of November 1943. . . .
>
> *The main thrust of the House resolution which was the subject of the hearings was to impel the Roosevelt administration to bypass current procedures and create a new administrative body which would enact emergency measures for the rescue of Jews who had succeeded in escaping from Nazi-dominated Europe. House Resolutions 350 and 352 were never passed, but the hearings and the resulting public debate in the media led to the formation of the WRB by President Roosevelt on January 22, 1944* [emphasis added].

Thus does a historian who has no ax to grind draw a straight line from the public campaign of the Emergency Committee to Roosevelt's establishment of the War Refugee Board.

Mrs. Dawidowicz is so sloppy and irresponsible a reporter that she seems not to have bothered to peruse the diaries of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. at the FDR Library in Hyde Park, New York. Had she taken the trouble, she could not have written, despite her fanaticism, hatred, and intellectual dishonesty, what she did. These diaries give an even more vivid picture of the political and psychological processes which led to the President's order establishing the WRB and of the role played by the Bergson group and the Emergency Committee in the decision.

Although many historians have told the story of how Morgenthau and his assistants were outraged at the State Department for its hostility to any rescue project, what they have failed to tell, either out of ignorance or for reasons of their own, is the story of how at the beginning of January 1944, after many months of conversation at the Treasury, Morgenthau had become irritated that the discussion was leading nowhere. A suggestion had been made that he go to the President and present the true facts, handing him a memorandum on the "Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews" (written by Josiah DuBois, the most compassionate member of the group). At a meeting on January 13, the diaries show, he interrupted the discussion to say:

> . . . suppose I go to the President with the most terrific document of condemnation of these people [in the State Department] and he turns to me and says, "Henry, I have never been so shocked in my life. What can I do?"

In answer, his assistants told him about the rescue resolution which had been approved unanimously in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and sent to the floor. This fired Morgenthau's imagination.

> . . . Our strongest out is the imminence of Congress doing something. . . . Really, when you get down to the point, this is a boiling pot on the Hill. You can't hold it; it is going to pop, and you have either got to move very fast, or the Congress of the U.S. will do it for you.

Three days later Morgenthau gave a memorandum to Roosevelt stating that "One of the greatest crimes in history, the slaughter of the Jewish people in Europe, is continuing unabated," and that "the best summary of the whole situation is contained in one sentence of a report submitted by the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate . . . recommending the passage of . . . the resolution." The memorandum concluded by warning that if the President failed to act without delay there might be a nasty scandal. The President understood; six days later he issued Executive Order 9417, creating the War Refugee Board.

Subsequently, Morgenthau, in a discussion of the WRB (March 18, 1944), asserted that it was created thanks to the Emergency Committee: "After all, the thing that made it possible to get the President really to act on this thing was the [Senate] resolution . . . hadn't it? . . . I think six months before I could not have done it."

After the establishment of the WRB the members of our group,

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especially Peter Bergson, developed friendly relations with key members of the Board, and in the course of time Morgenthau and Bergson became personal friends. Indeed, Nahum Goldmann complained to the State Department that neither he nor Rabbi Wise had succeeded in convincing John Pehle to break with Bergson, because (according to the official record of Goldmann's conversation) Pehle "had taken the position that Bergson's Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe had inspired the introduction of the Gillette-Rogers resolution, which in turn had led to the creation of the War Refugee Board. . . ."

Was all this just "a coincidence in timing," as Mrs. Dawidowicz writes, between the rescue resolution in both houses of Congress and Morgenthau's intervention with the President? Is it just *chutzpah* on the part of the Irgunists "falsely to claim . . . credit for the creation of the WRB"?

The proof of the accuracy of what I have told here is that everything is meticulously documented. But I also present the testimony of a witness nobody would suspect of being biased in our favor:

> Shortly after the outbreak of the war, a handful of young Jews from Palestine, engaged in a campaign on behalf of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, . . . came to the United States. . . . They formed a Committee for a Jewish Army, whose leader and most dynamic personality was Hillel Kook, better known under his pseudonym Peter H. Bergson. With a flair for drama and publicity, Bergson managed to attract to his activities prominent Jews and non-Jews not before associated with Jewish causes. His dashing resourcefulness made the mainstream Zionists look apathetic and impotent, while his political extremism and organizational irresponsibility put him on a collision course with the whole Zionist movement. Nevertheless, his inventive and assertive tactics to gain public attention . . . evoked enormous responsiveness to the urgency of the Nazi threat among Jews who were beyond the reach of traditional Jewish organizations. . . .
>
> Having abandoned the campaign for a Jewish Army, the Bergsonites now concentrated on rescue, even to the exclusion of a Zionist program. On July 26, 1943 they called a massive Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe, which then transformed itself into an Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. . . . Bergson and his friends embarked on a campaign that enlisted the support of prominent Americans in government, the entertainment world, and the professions. With stunning success they dramatized the issue of Jewish life and death with stark boldness and rage. Being young and outsiders, untrammeled by the responsibility or prudence which inhibited American Jewish leaders, and also profoundly touched by the tragedy of the destruction of the European Jews, the Bergson group moved without regard for consequences other than their objectives. In the next six months they electrified the American public by their tactics. The Bergsonites were probably the most potent influence, seconded by Henry Morgenthau's staff in the Treasury Department, in Roosevelt's creation of the War Refugee Board in January 1944, the first and only substantial program on behalf of the beleaguered European Jews to which the Roosevelt administration had committed itself.

The curious may wish to know who this apologist for and admirer of the Bergson group might be. Well, this testimony was given by none other than Lucy S. Dawidowicz in an extensive survey, "A Century of Jewish History, 1881-1981: The View from America," in the *American Jewish Year Book* for 1982.

SAMUEL MERLIN

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz dismisses the notion that American Jewish leaders were inactive during the Holocaust because they feared that "Jewish agitation" might increase domestic anti-Semitism. "[A]nti-Semitism did not intimidate the Jewish organizations into silence," she asserts, adding that "when historians cite the pervasive presence of anti-Semitism during the war, they mean to underscore the relative powerlessness of American Jews," rather than to suggest Jewish fear of arousing anti-Semites.

A glance at the writings of historians who discuss the issue seems to suggest otherwise. Henry Feingold (*The Politics of Rescue*) writes that Jewish leaders worked to "play down the idea of a Jewish vote or even a Jewish point of view" lest it be charged that the New Deal was "a 'Jew Deal.'" Arthur Morse (*While Six Million Died*) notes that some Jewish leaders opposed tampering with the U.S. immigration quotas for fear that "increased immigration might aggravate domestic anti-Semitism." Saul Friedman (*No Haven for the Oppressed*) likewise argues that the failure of the Jewish organizations to lobby for the Wagner-Rogers child-refugee bill of 1939 was partly a result of fears that they would be accused of "double loyalty." Even historians sympathetic to the role of American Jewry during the Holocaust concede this point. Yehuda Bauer (in *Midstream*, April 1968) mentions the Jewish leadership's "fear of arousing anti-Semitism if the United States were requested to act specifically in the interests of the Jews in Europe." Naomi Cohen, in her history of the American Jewish Committee, writes that the Committee even turned down a suggestion that it sponsor an American speaking tour by Winston Churchill (in the 1930's) because of its "fear that any known connection between Churchill and the Jews would bring charges of warmongering from anti-Semites."

Most interesting is the position which Mrs. Dawidowicz herself took back in 1962, when the debate around American Jewry and the Holocaust was less clouded by political partisanship. "The great Jewish outcry was stifled because it was not thought politic for American Jews," she wrote in a book review for COMMENTARY [of Ben Hecht's *Perfidy*, March 1962]. Among the reasons she cited for this "stifling" was that some Jewish leaders feared "for themselves, and for the good name of American Jews."

On other points as well, Mrs. Dawidowicz's article contrasts oddly with the views which the author herself expressed in 1962. Today she says: "American Jews . . . could certainly have done more. . . . But I am not persuaded that in the end they would have accomplished much more than they did." In 1962, however, she argued that "there should have been marches on Washington. . . . A hunger strike of thousands of Jews around the White House and the Capitol might have had a response."

Mrs. Dawidowicz now claims that the Bergson group "falsely claimed credit for the creation of the War Refugee Board." In 1962, she herself wrote that Bergson's "proposal to establish a United States Commission to rescue European Jews

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brought about the creation of the War Refugee Board."

It is hard to avoid the impression that Mrs. Dawidowicz's current deriding of the Bergson group is less an objective assessment of its activities than a partisan revulsion against its association with Revisionist Zionism. This is illustrated in particular by her description of the Haganah's sinking of the Irgun ship *Altalena*. "In the battle that ensued the ship was sunk by government artillery," she writes. Yet there was no battle; Ben-Gurion simply ordered his troops to sink the ship and shoot the survivors as they swam to shore. Eighteen Jews ("Irgun terrorists") were murdered in this fasion. The Irgun did not shoot back.

Perhaps the most remarkable passage in Mrs. Dawidowicz's article is the complaint that critics of the Jewish establishment ignore "the persistent efforts which the American Jewish organizations made all through the 1930's to get Congress to enact special or emergency legislation to admit Jewish refugees." In fact, at no time did the Jewish leadership press for elimination or even liberalization of the quotas. When Congressman Samuel Dickstein in 1933 announced his intention to introduce a bill admitting to the U.S. "all German Jews related to American citizens," Rabbi Stephen Wise told the House Immigration Committee that he was opposed to such a bill and to any "special amendment to American immigration laws" (New York *Times*, March 23, 1933). Cyrus Adler of the American Jewish Committee likewise opposed the Dickstein bill, warning that "it will be charged that America's Jews want to sacrifice America's obvious and essential interests on behalf of their German co-religionists." When Representative Emanuel Celler introduced, in March 1938, a bill exempting all victims of persecution from the quota regulations, the leaders of the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, and the National Council of Jewish Women urged him to abandon the effort, which he subsequently did.

RAFAEL MEDOFF

Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is a renewed debate within the Jewish community as to whether enough was done by Jewish leaders and organizations during the Holocaust. Unfortunately, the article by Lucy S. Dawidowicz puts critics of American Jewry into the camp of those who wish to discredit the Jewish people. The argument must be debated on its own merits without attributing evil designs to either side. I think the following information should be considered by historian Dawidowicz.

The editor of the Labor Zionist journal, the *Jewish Frontier*, Hayim Greenberg, himself an important officer in the Jewish establishment, wrote a bitter denunciation of the failure of Jewish leaders to confront the Holocaust on February 12, 1943:

> American Jewry has not done—and has made no effort to do—its elementary duty toward the millions of Jews who are captive and doomed to die in Europe. . . . It will never be possible to explain why the chief organizations of American Jewry . . . could not at this dire hour unite for the purpose of seeking ways to save those who perhaps can still be saved.

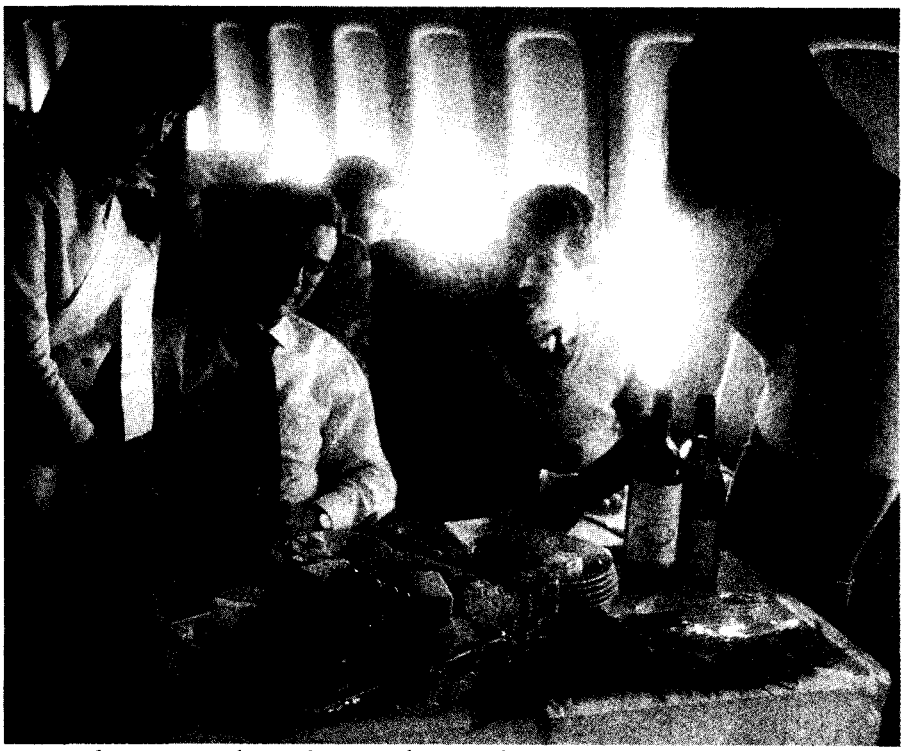
Greenberg went on in his essay (entitled "Bankrupt") to describe the failure of the American Jewish Congress, the one organization that was doing something. He condemned them for delegating rescue to a committee that did not meet for weeks on end and for choosing a chairman who was engaged in other activities not related to rescue work for long periods of time.

How would Mrs. Dawidowicz explain Greenberg's accusations?

In his book, *The Terrible Secret*, Walter Laqueur, the distinguished scholar of the Holocaust, states:

> Jewish organizations . . . Zionists, including the leaders of the World Jewish Congress, were absorbed in "postwar planning" and were paying little more than ceremonious attention to what was happening in Europe, in stark contrast to the outcries from Geneva and Istanbul demanding immediate action to save the remnants.

There is much evidence to substantiate this. Consider the democratically organized American Jewish Conference which convened in



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New York in June 1943. At the meeting, 123 delegates from 64 of the largest Jewish organizations joined 379 elected delegates from 77 cities and 59 regions. Their purpose was to speak as one voice on "problems relating to the rights and status of Jews in the postwar world and upon all matters looking to the implementation of the rights of the Jewish people to Palestine." Although Rabbi Stephen Wise reminded them they had to put rescue on the agenda, the thrust of the conference was the demand for a Jewish state. Mrs. Dawidowicz must also consider the comment of Joseph Proskauer, head of the American Jewish Committee, who took the Committee out of the umbrella organization because "The Conference subordinated the rescue of European Jewry to the issue of a Jewish Commonwealth."

Regarding Nahum Goldmann, the head of the World Jewish Congress, Walter Laqueur writes:

> The problem was that despite all the meetings with the mighty and the famous, his political understanding and foresight were not really deep, less so than that of Richard Lichtheim who realized early that the one conceivable way to rescue at least a part of European Jewry was precisely to exert maximum pressure on the satellites.

Laqueur probably was thinking of the possibility of rescuing the Jews of Rumania when he wrote that. The British embassy in Ankara sent a telegram to its Foreign Office about the prospect of Jewish emigration from Rumania as early as December 1942. In early February, the New York *Times* ran a story on the prospect, and on December 16, the Bergson-Hecht-Irgun-related group ran a large ad pointing out that rescue was possible, yet nothing was being done. Rabbi Wise, shooting from the hip, denounced this ad as a cruel hoax and had the establishment ignore the Rumanian offer. Over five months later Rabbi Wise confirmed the Rumanian offer. . . . Congress needed approval fom both the State and Treasury Departments to release funds for use in the Nazi satellites. State procrastinated. Rabbi Wise went to President Roosevelt himself and got approval. However, State still procrastinated until late December when the deal could no longer be consummated.

FDR had known from late 1942 on that the State Department was stonewalling rescue. Jewish organizations had been petitioning the President before and during the Bermuda Conference held in the spring of 1943 for a committee with full diplomatic powers to rescue Jews under the Nazi heel. The Bermuda Conference turned out to be a fiasco, and the Bergson group decided to put pressure on the President through the United States Congress, having its close friends, Senator Guy Gillette and Congressman Will Rogers, Jr., sponsor bills urging the establishment of a War Refugee Board. The idea was to play down immigration to Palestine which both American generals and the British Foreign Office opposed for fear of an Arab revolt. Among the opponents of the resolution was Rabbi Wise who insisted that it must contain a call for Britain to open the gates of Palestine. With over four million Jews dead and no response from FDR other than the usual Rosh Hashanah greetings, Rabbi Wise testified on November 19, 1943 before the House:

> If the President were to say, "I cannot appoint such a commission," he would state it in such terms that would live in the hearts and minds of Americans, and we, the Jewish population of America, would accept any statement made in entire good faith.

Mrs. Dawidowicz is correct in saying that Josiah DuBois and his friends in the Treasury Department, who were instrumental in embarrassing Roosevelt into establishing the War Refugee Board with their "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews," were moved by their own outrage at State's perfidy, not by outside petitions. I spoke with DuBois a number of times in the process of arranging an award for him from the Philadelphia chapter of the American Jewish Committee. He told his boss, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., that if Morgenthau did not go to Roosevelt with the report, or if Roosevelt did nothing, he would release the contents of the report to the press. Doesn't Mrs. Dawidowicz know that the Gillette-Rogers resolution created a political climate which influenced Roosevelt's decision?

It would be unfair to say that American Jewish leaders and organizations were completely bankrupt, as Hayim Greenberg did; however, they certainly did not move heaven and earth to save their brethren.

PHILIP ROSEN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is entirely natural that historians—people with definite political and philosophical bents—will fashion the reporting of events according to their own versions—and the truth be damned. Lucy S. Dawidowicz obviously is driven by the same sort of impulses shared by ideologues like Alexander Cockburn of the *Village Voice* or Lenni Brenner, whose book is a paean to Trotsky's great work in saving Jews from the Holocaust. The truth is that Mrs Dawidowicz's hero, Rabbi Stephen Wise, orchestrated an intense day-to-day campaign during the war years against the Bergson group instead of mobilizing public opinion for a U.S. agency that would deal specifically with rescuing Jews from Hitler's Europe. Mrs. Dawidowicz uses the favorite device of historians and journalists alike—ignore it, don't mention it—even though the FBI, the State Department, and the Immigration Service documents are there for all to see. . . .

I don't know what is behind her bitter and inaccurate attacks—perhaps she's a Bundist with a grudge, but who cares? The point is that she is trying to suppress history by charging that others are trying to rewrite it. So she vilifies anyone critical of the wartime Jewish and Zionist establishment . . . on the Left and on the Right. She totally ignores the many other critics of Stephen Wise, Nahum Goldmann, and company—the entire spectrum of the Orthodox, for example. The march of the rabbis, which she so contemptuously dismisses, was staged by the Bergson group in cooperation with Agudath Israel; and world Mizrachi leader Rabbi Meir Berlin praised the Bergson group while attacking Wise and the rest of the leadership. Israeli scholars like Michael J. Cohen and Zvi Ganin—neither of whom is right-wing or left-wing so far as I know—have given credit to the Bergson committees for their wartime work.

How dare Mrs. Dawidowicz smear every critic of the Jewish establishment? . . . It is not sur-

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prising that inquiries into the actions of the wartime Zionist and Jewish leadership have inspired defensive actions by those who believe that the establishment did all it could. The defenders use various red-herrings to dismiss criticism, labeling critics as "guilt-ridden" if not "self-hating" Jews who are hell-bent on blaming Hadassah for the Holocaust while letting the Nazis off the hook. But Mrs. Dawidowicz and other historians like Bernard Wasserstein with a political ax to grind are doing nothing but harm by their distortion of history.

LOUIS RAPOPORT

Jerusalem *Post*
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz's "Indicting American Jews" shows that historical articles can be written without factual proof. . . . By citing only a few examples, all that the space of a letter to the editor allows, I will endeavor to refute her theories. . . .

On September 23, 1933, at a meeting of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Stephen Wise declared that the Zionists take the position that "nothing can be done" to help European Jews. The Zionist leader Louis Lipsky repeated this statement many times. . . . Even in 1939, when the situation was much more critical, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver was against such help because "It would result in Palestine getting the short end of the bargain." . . . David Ben-Gurion, in a speech to Hadassah on February 23, 1939, said that to separate the problem of the refugees from the issue of Palestine "is dangerous from the Zionist point of view."

In October 1939, after the start of the war, Recha Freier, founder of Youth Aliyah, begged for $10,000 to help get 1,000 children out of Germany. Hadassah denied this help because the organization could provide help only if the children were in Palestine. On October 16, Mrs. Freier sent a telegam which said: "Special immigration a matter of life and death." The record of the Hadassah board meeting states: "The board agreed that were it possible to consider the matter simply on humanitarian grounds, the correct formula for supporting the project might be found. . . ." At the same time, however, $25,000 was approved for an advisory committee . . . , $5,000 was voted for aid to the victims of a Turkish earthquake, . . . $12,500 for a band and private limousines in addition to the cost of the World's Fair pavilion, $150,000 for the Jewish National Fund, etc., etc. In the meantime, *the children perished.*

President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic wanted at least 100,000 Jews to settle in his country, in a place called Sosua. He asked American Jewish organizations for help. An editorial in *Congress Weekly,* February 21, 1941, stated: "Sosua is not a Jewish project. . . . It does not belong to the scheme of Jewish things. It is not a Jewish enterprise." The minutes of Hadassah report that the board decided not to help settle some childen in Sosua because Trujillo refused to guarantee that the children would be sent to Palestine after the war. . . .

On November 23, 1941, at an Inter-American Jewish Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, Archie Bennett said:

> I have listened to sixteen or eighteen hours of oratory, some Zionist addresses, the kind I heard twenty or thirty years ago, . . . a number of speeches dealing with the remote past and remote future, but scarcely any dealing at all with the realities of the present moment. . . . A day of reckoning will come, perhaps after the war is over. . . . We expect to be asked, "What have you done?"

After this speech, Nahum Goldmann called an adjournment and announced a lunch discussion "on specific problems of anti-Nazi activity." It is not reported in the minutes if anything was discussed while the delegates ate lunch. . . .

Mrs. Dawidowicz mentions Gerhart Riegner, but Riegner said to me that "with a little imagination, a slight bending of the laws, tens of thousands or maybe hundreds of thousands of Jews could have been saved even during the war."...

Mrs. Dawidowicz also mentions Nahum Goldmann. Goldmann wrote in his autobiography: "I sometimes found more understanding [about the Holocaust] among Gentile leaders then among Jewish leaders." And in my discussions with him he emphasized that he was a foreigner in the United States and as such was unable to do what he believed he should have done.

In 1944 Ira Hirschmann, on a mission for the War Refugee Board, made a deal with the Rumanian ambassador to dissolve the camp in Transnistria and 5,000 children were saved. The Rumanian ambassador said to him, "Why didn't you come sooner?" On February 4, 1972 Hirschmann wrote me:

> So defeatist and fearful was the general climate among the leading Jews before I left for Turkey that there was hardly a single individual who did not attempt to dissuade me from my mission. . . . I can say without qualification that had I or someone else penetrated the polite façade of the State Department and the Roosevelt administration a year earlier many thousands of Jews could have been saved.

I could add to this list the testimony of many other witnesses who seriously question and even accuse Jewish organizations and their leaders. . . .

LEON WELLS

Closter, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to clarify several points concerning some incorrect statements made about me in Lucy S. Dawidowicz's article.

First, Mrs. Dawidowicz claims, referring to me, that ". . . the young man had already found American Jews guilty. . . ." I have never taken any such position. In fact, any serious reading of the articles which I have written regarding American Jews during the Holocaust would reveal my contention that the Jewish leadership misled the Jewish people into focusing their energies upon all sorts of activities that did not necessarily deal with the issue of *rescue.*

Second, I was never the commission's "principal researcher," as pronounced by Mrs. Dawidowicz. Although I lent advice and materials to various people connected with the commission, my six months on the commission were spent chiefly in archives, which I utilized as primary sources in helping to verify and clarify some difficult topics concerning the Jewish leadership in the Holocaust. Let me emphasize that my contract with the commission was drawn for six months; my contract thus was fulfilled and "terminated" only on the agreed-upon terms.

Just as a side note, I would like to add that, from the start of this

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commission, I expressed to Seymour Finger on several occasions my opinion that it would be almost impossible to deal publicly with the explosive subject of the American Jewish leadership during the Holocaust. I was very much aware of the immense difficulties while discussing the topic with my professors (including the "non-Jew" mentioned in the article) and while carrying out research at the various archives. Sadly, my early skepticism proved to be well founded.

As for my own current interest in the area of the Jewish leadership, I am in the process of compiling a manuscript on the subject.

ELIYHO MATZ

Forest Hills, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was disappointed that Lucy S. Dawidowicz, in her acount of *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?*, seems to have misperceived the focus of the film, which was simply an attempt to raise some pertinent questions about the reaction of both the American government and the American Jewish leadership to the Nazi extermination program during World War II.

Instead of providing a well-documented survey of the period, Mrs. Dawidowicz chooses to attack my integrity and the trustworthiness of my film. Indeed, her essay seems to imply that it was a propaganda film on behalf of Peter Bergson and Samuel Merlin, and that I started out with preconceived notions of what the research would reveal. She falsely claims I did not visit the National Archives of the United States or the FDR Library in Hyde Park, New York. In fact, when my research began, I knew nothing of the work of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe; it was only after David S. Wyman, professor of history at the University of Massachusetts and author of the COMMENTARY article "Why Auschwitz Was Never Bombed," suggested to me that I interview Bergson and Merlin that I began to investigate their activities. Also, Mrs. Dawidowicz implies that no attempt was made in the film to present the views of other Jewish leaders, which is simply untrue. Nahum Goldmann was president of many of the major Jewish organization in the United States during his life, had worked closely with Rabbi Stephen Wise, and had been in Washington during the period covered by the film. He was the only major Jewish leader who agreed to be interviewed by me on camera. One example of the response to my inquiries was that of Justice Justine Polier Wise, who graciously met with me to explain many historical details about her father, but who declined to appear on camera to talk about Rabbi Wise.

Mrs. Dawidowicz questions the emphasis given to Merlin and Bergson. The film was supposed to cover events of the period and not "the meetings at which Jewish leaders sat day and night" which impress Mrs. Dawidowicz. Mrs. Dawidowicz attacks Merlin and Bergson's activism, and says that the criticism of the rabbis who demonstrated in Washington—they were called "not representative of the most thoughtful elements in Jewry"—was "not an ungenerous way of describing them." Despite opposition to the demonstration, the rabbis were received on Capitol Hill by the Vice President and by members of Congress in conjunction with the Gillette-Rogers resolution to establish a special commission to rescue European Jews. This resolution was opposed by Rabbi Wise and other Jewish leaders. Mrs. Dawidowicz even goes so far as to defend the sorry record of the American government during the extermination period. "Is the United States to be reviled and repudiated on this account?" she ask rhetorically.

This attitude permeates the entire article. Mrs. Dawidowicz insinuates that the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust and my film have "much in common besides subject matter." She never says what. Mrs. Dawidowicz tries to imply that the film is part of an anti-Israel movement on the Left. However, my co-producer James R. Kurth has supported Israel in a variety of ways and has testified before Congress in support of Israeli positions and in opposition to arms sales to Arab countries. It is strange that in her summary of the Alexander Cockburn article in the *Village Voice* she omits Yitshaq Ben-Ami, mentioned prominently in the piece and the author of *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory*, which criticizes the failures of the American Jewish leadership even more strongly than my film; Ben-Ami is still actively involved in Zionist activities on behalf of Israel. Mrs. Dawidowicz also omits mention of the many scholarly articles appearing in journals ranging from the National Archives' own *Prologue*, to *Midstream*, to the Los Angeles *Times*, which discuss the work of Bergson and Merlin and the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe and contrast their activities with those of the Jewish organizations. Mrs. Dawidowicz fails to mention that Nahum Goldmann requested the State Department to deport Bergson and told the Department that Rabbi Wise felt Bergson was an equal to Hitler as an enemy of the Jews.

It is saddening indeed to read Mrs. Dawidowicz's excuses for the failures of the American government and Jewish leadership and her attempts to revile and repudiate a group of political activists who attempted to get American power involved in rescuing the Jews from the Nazis. Mrs. Dawidowicz herself has credited the Bergson group with helping to establish the War Refugee Board in her other writings, and it is disappointing that she has chosen to attack them along with the commission and my film.

Finally, a word about Mrs. Dawidowicz's conclusion that "it is Jarvik and his companions on the Left who have turned the Holocaust into a stick with which to beat the Jewish community for its 'sin' of supporting Israel." There is not a shred of evidence for her claim. I do not have one word about Israel today in the film; I have never claimed nor do I think it is a "sin" to support Israel, and I most certainly do not "beat the Jewish community." Further, Mrs. Dawidowicz says "the Holocaust's bitter history is now being transformed into a vehicle of anti-Semitism. . . . The anti-Semites of the Left blame it on the Jews," as if this comment somehow applies to my film. Yet neither my film nor I have ever done any such thing as "blame it on the Jews."

I spent years researching and preparing a film about efforts to rescue Jews from the Nazis and the political forces in America which led to these efforts. I attempted to detail the tragic dynamic by which men of good will were trapped by institutional and ideological constraints which failed during the crisis. I made the film in the hope that lessons might be learned to help prevent a similar tragedy in the future. It is indeed ironic to

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be characterized in COMMENTARY as one who "blame[s] it on the Jews."

I only ask that readers see *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?* and judge for themselves.

LAURENCE JARVIK
Santa Monica, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a scholar involved for nineteen years in the area discussed by Lucy S. Dawidowicz, allow me to make two observations: (1) Mrs. Dawidowicz's article should be recognized as a very biased response to the issues with which it deals. (2) Mrs. Dawidowicz dismisses Laurence Jarvik's statement that Jewish organizations refused him access to their files. While it is true that the American Jewish Committee and several other Jewish organizations are cooperative in this regard, it is also true that the American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and the Zionist Archives have allowed only a very few privileged researchers to work with their basic archival material.

DAVID S. WYMAN
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Indicting American Jews," Lucy S. Dawidowicz herself makes an unfair and inaccurate indictment of the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust.

Mrs. Dawidowicz makes much of the term "commission," stating that commonly a government creates a commission. Her point would apply to a totalitarian state, where non-governmental organizations exist only by sufferance or subterfuge. In the United States, non-governmental groups have long played a significant role and often have names like commissions, congresses, committees, and councils, notwithstanding the fact that there is an official U.S. *Congress*, a National Security *Council*, congressional and executive-branch *committees*, and official *commissions*. There are, for example, the American Jewish *Congress*, the American Jewish *Committee*, the Synagogue *Council* of America, the *Commission* to Study the Organization of Peace, and the *Commission* for the Ratification of the Genocide Convention. Justice Goldberg himself has headed many such non-governmental organizations, characteristic of a healthy democracy. He was President of the American Jewish Committee, 1969-70 and has since served as Honorary President; is Honorary Chairman of the American Friends of Hebrew University; was Chairman of the United Nations Association of the U.S.A., 1968-70 and has since been Honorary Chairman; was Chairman of the Board of the Synagogue Council of America, 1969-71, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965-69, and of the International Education Association, 1969-70; and has served with great distinction in many other non-governmental organizations, including the United Steelworkers and the AFL-CIO. His record of service in the wartime OSS, and as Secretary of Labor, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and Ambassador-at-Large is well known and respected. In a democracy, both governmental and non-governmental organizations have their place. That Mrs. Dawidowicz should attack a man with such an exemplary record of public service without even bothering to interview him to determine the validity of allegations is astonishing and deplorable.

She also attacks my credentials. With a minimum of inquiry or research, she could have ascertained that I have authored or edited four scholarly books since 1975, served on or managed a number of panels like the commission, written many chapters for scholarly books edited by others, and published numerous articles in academic journals including *Orbis*, *International Organization*, the *American Journal of International Law*, and *Middle East Review*. While I have not previously written on the Holocaust, I have had first-hand experience with its consequences during my wartime service in Europe and my subsequent Foreign Service assignment in Germany issuing visas to survivors. In 1971 I received the Humanitarian Award from the American Committee for the Rescue of Iraqi Jews

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for my work on their behalf while serving as an Ambassador at the U.S. Mission to the UN. In April I testified in Newark, along with Professor Raul Hilberg, in the trial of a Baltic-American charged with . . . having participated in the murder of hundreds of Jews. I am also a consultant to a number of American Jewish organizations.

On the prehistory of the commission which, she says, "I have had (without other corroboration) from Finger himself," Mrs. Dawidowicz is grossly inaccurate. Perhaps that is because our only discussion of the subject was in a brief telephone conversation in February 1983. She never bothered to interview me in person in preparation for her article, nor did she even telephone Justice Goldberg, let alone see him. I did *not* turn the task of writing the proposal over to Samuel Merlin, as she alleges; I did it myself.

I did commission Merlin to do much of the research and prepare a preliminary draft. After all, he has been deeply immersed in the subject and accumulating files for over forty years. I was also impressed by his knowledge and thoroughness when we had worked together on Middle East subjects. I was fully aware of his former Irgun connections; however, I knew that he had broken with Begin three decades ago. Moreover, the members of the commission, including Justice Goldberg, were identified with every Jewish-establishment group in the country; consequently, I was confident that any bias on Merlin's part would be counterbalanced by the commission and my own editing.

As an additional precaution, we added an Academic Review Committee. My communication of November 2, 1981, to which Mrs. Dawidowicz refers, did not indicate that "something had gone wrong," as she alleges. This was only a month and a half after the commission's first meeting and our work had scarcely begun. The suggestion of an Academic Review Committee came from one commission member, a respected friend of mine, and I accepted it because it made sense and provided an additional guarantee of objectivity. Incidentally, her statement that I invited her to be a member of the Academic Review Committee is not true. I challenge her to produce a letter or any other evidence of such an invitation.

Justice Goldberg did in August 1981 invite her to become a member of the commission. Jack Eisner's office, which was handling the replies, informed me (apparently erroneously) that she had accepted; consequently, I included her name among prospective members in a preliminary list made up in early September. When she telephoned me to protest that she had not accepted, I apologized and immediately deleted her name. She knows this is true because the New York *Times* of September 23, 1981, to which she refers in her article, did not list her among the members. We would have welcomed her, criticism and all, but the panel of thirty-four members is sufficiently knowledgeable and distinguished as it stands.

Mrs. Dawidowicz is also grossly inaccurate with respect to the preliminary draft submitted to the commission for the June 2 meeting. It was no longer Merlin's draft; I had revised it three times, in response to suggestions from the Academic Review Committee and the chairman. It was certainly *not* "an effort to insure the Irgun's place in history as the sole defender of the Jewish people in its darkest hour," as she alleges. In 76 pages there was only one paragraph about the Bergson (Irgun) group, indicating that they were Palestinians and, consequently, not one of the American Jewish groups to be studied.

Another error is the statement that Merlin resigned because he felt he was insulted at the June 2 meeting. In fact, he had resigned a month earlier because of the pressure of other work to which he was committed. His letter of resignation had been circulated to members of the commission *before* the meeting.

"As a consequence," she writes, "Eisner (who, it turned out, was a strong Merlin partisan) stopped the flow of money." This, too, is inaccurate. Eisner had been behind in his commitments since January. Moreover, for more than two months after the June 2 meeting and his subsequent conversation with Goldberg that day, he kept promising to provide further financing. When I phoned him August 19 to inform him of Goldberg's decision to dissolve the commission because we were no longer in a position to meet our commitments, Eisner said: "You would have had a check tomorrow." All of this information, except Eisner's comment on August 19, was in my "lengthy recapitulation" to the members of the commission of February 1, 1983, to which Mrs. Dawidowicz refers and of which I sent her a copy, at her request. But she chose to ignore any facts in the memorandum which did not fit in with her prejudgment. (Incidentally, our agreement with Eisner stipulated that he would have no control over the content of the report.)

As a further indication of her attitude, Mrs. Dawidowicz asked me in her one phone call during the past eighteen months why her favorite member had been dropped (no member has been dropped); he had been invited to the February 9 meeting and had been sent all documentation.

One final comment on the peripheral issues to which she devotes almost all of her comments on the commission (with the dubious accuracy indicated above). Our first communications, in September 1981, referred to the Jack P. Eisner Institute on the Holocaust and cooperation with it. This was done for two reasons: (1) the Institute had planned for an October conference on the actions of certain governments, including the American, during the Holocaust. Eisner had been reluctant to provide $10,000 to finance it until I persuaded him that it would be helpful to the work of the commission; (2) I intended to rely on the Director of the Institute for advice and, in fact, did so.

Much of Mrs. Dawidowicz's article deals with two phenomena that have nothing to do with the commission: i.e., Laurence Jarvik's film, *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?*, which was produced before the commission was organized and the Lenni Brenner book, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*, which I find detestable. Her effort to link us with them smacks of McCarthyism.

But the most remarkable part of the article is Mrs. Dawidowicz's failure to deal with the *substance* of the commission's work—which should be the most important consideration. She received in February a copy of Justice Goldberg's interim draft (84 pages), prepared with my assistance. Since she failed to deal with the substance of that draft, I shall briefly quote its main conclusions: the American Jewish community then had nowhere near the influence it has now; American

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Jews did more than is generally realized and far more than other ethnic groups; and even a prompt action by American Jewish leaders could have saved only a tiny fraction of the six million Jews doomed by Hitler when there was a Congress opposed to loosening immigration quotas and a President preoccupied with the war.

I should like to know which of these tentative conclusions Mrs. Dawidowicz finds inaccurate or misguided, and why. Meanwhile, the thirty-four members of the commission, who are identified with every major American Jewish organization, were invited on February 9, and again a month later, to submit written comments and suggestions. Two of them, identified with B'nai B'rith, stated that we had not given adequate attention to the activities of their organization. We have since assigned a researcher to delve into the B'nai B'rith files and conduct interviews in order to supplement our information. Other researchers are preparing papers, initially commissioned last year, on the American Jewish Committee, the American Joint Distribution Committee, the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Labor Committee, Orthodox Jewry, and the coverage by the American (non-Yiddish) press of the Holocaust. *None* of these organizations has criticized Justice Goldberg's draft nor, with the exception of the aforementioned suggestions about B'nai B'rith, has any member written any critical comments. Moreover, a number of major Jewish organization officials have praised the draft. (I should also mention that all of the papers are being done by reputable, experienced scholars, none of whom has any connection with the Irgun, the Revisionists, the leftists, Merlin, or the Institute for Mediterranean Affairs.)

Yes, the work of the commission is going forward. Unlike Mrs. Dawidowicz's article, its conclusions will be carefully weighed, thoroughly researched, and devoid of malice or bias.

SEYMOUR MAXWELL FINGER
Director of Research
American Jewish Commission
on the Holocaust
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Lucy S. Dawidowicz's disclosures in "Indicting American Jews," I looked over the New York *Times* and other press reports on the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust. The clippings brought to mind my early reactions to the panel's formation: designed to examine the behavior of Jewish organizations, it appeared to me to be more of a fault-finding than a fact-finding expedition.

Press reports of the commission contained all the . . . credibility-damaging implications so popular these days with biographies and autobiographies designed to debunk images of the past. . . . The printed word acts as a primary tool of double-think and double-speak. We take it for granted that print journalism is more in the business of selling newspapers than committed to investigating the facts behind the facts. When a historian of Mrs. Dawidowicz's reputation addresses the record in relation to a new set of biographers, she presents the "investigation" in a clearer perspective.

MARTHA S. CHERKIS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I congratulate COMMENTARY on its publication of Lucy S. Dawidowicz's article attacking Peter Bergson and Samuel Merlin for their malicious and continuing efforts to charge that American Jews were indifferent to the plight of the victims of the Holocaust.

During those tragic days I left newspaper work in Cleveland to become actively involved in the American Jewish Conference—the organization headed by Henry Monsky of B'nai B'rith—as its executive director. That organization's 501 delegates, representing the American Jewish community, voted overwhelmingly for the establishment of a free and democratic commonwealth in Palestine. There were only 4 negative votes and 19 abstentions. But this pro-Zionist vote did not mean that American Jews were indifferent to the urgent need for measures to rescue European Jews. One of our three commissions, the Commission on Rescue, was actively engaged on a day-to-day basis in recommending proposals to rescue endangered Jews.

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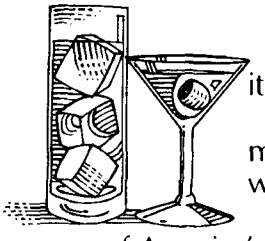

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At our first convention, Marie Syrkin and I drafted the resolution that was adopted. For many months, the Conference pressed our government to open the gates of the United States as well as of Palestine. The Conference sent delegations to Washington for sessions with John Pehle of the War Refugee Board, with State and Treasury officials, and with Congressmen. We attacked the State Department, denouncing Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long's labored defense of U.S. immigration procedures. Professor Ben Halpern made a major contribution to that statement.

I drafted a statement for Rabbi Stephen Wise for presentation to the House Foreign Affairs Committee in which we favored opening Palestine as the most feasible sanctuary, but in which we also urged our country to open it own doors. The claim that we did not want the United States to let in Jewish refugees because we feared that this would somehow obstruct our drive for a Jewish state is an absurd and malicious canard that has been circulated by anti-Zionists, King Hussein, Arab propagandists, and the Neturei Karta. It was belied by the resolutions and activities which we undertook in 1941, by our formal congressional testimony, and by top officials who dealt with the issue at the time, Pehle and the veteran George Warren of the State Department.

We never relaxed our activities for a moment. We helped to fill Madison Square Garden with mass demonstrations many times. We sponsored the tragic memorial meeting marking the first anniversary of the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto, where my father died. We appealed for food and supplies for Jews in the occupied territories. We insisted that our government pressure the Britsh to open Palestine and to clear escape routes. We urged cooperation with the underground to help in smuggling Jews across borders. We appealed to neutral and satellite countries to provide havens. We called on the administration for psychological warfare to encourage the Hungarians to shield Jews and to warn the Nazi war criminals that they would be punished. Washington agreed, and we brought some 50,000 Jews to Madison Square in New York to hear the administration's warnings in the effort to save the threatened Jews of Hungary.

Of course we were deeply concerned with the plight of Europe's Jews. As early as 1940, Rabbi Wise sent a message to Cleveland, an activist community. His telegram was considered at a meeting of the Jewish Community Council, of which I was a member. Some of our people expressed fears that American Jews would be accused of interfering with the war effort. But I then called for a show of hands and a majority approved the call for a demonstration. It brought 12,000 people to the Cleveland auditorium.

Throughout this time we were constantly under fire from the Revisionists—Bergson, Merlin, and Eri Jabotinsky—who took it upon themselves to rescue Jews and who never abandoned their propaganda impugning the sincerity and integrity of the Jewish Agency and the major American Jewish organizations. They were showmen. They held conferences and established a series of paper organizations stressing the need to rescue the Jews of Europe, accusing American Jews of failure and unconcern. I was reluctant to enter into a public debate, but Bergson and his aides never ceased their denunciations.

In an absurd climax, in May 1944, the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation opened an "embassy" in Washington to act as the "trustee for the Hebrew nation." At this point, major Jewish organizations struck back. In my statement for the American Jewish Conference I categorized the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation as an "irresponsible adventure" which lacked a mandate from the Jewish National Assembly in Palestine. We charged that its ideology would fragment the Jewish people. But the non-Jewish press could not understand this strange internal conflict and the *World Telegram* dismissed our press release with five words: "One Jewish Group Hits Another." . . .

Judging from recent developments, Messrs. Bergson and Merlin have reactivated their efforts and seem determined to deprecate the role of American Jews and to divide them.

I. L. KENEN

Near East Research
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As one who saw the film *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?* and who was also minimally involved with the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust, I agree wholeheartedly with Lucy S. Dawidowicz's criticism of both endeavors. . . .

I have been an active member of the Jewish Labor Committee [JLC], serving on its national executive board and as its representative on the National Advisory Council of Jewish Community Relations Councils. In addition, I chair the JLC's Holocaust Committee. The JLC was formed during the years covered in Mrs. Dawidowicz's article for the express purpose of saving Jewish lives, particularly of those who were active in the labor and trade-union movements. The newly founded organization succeeded in bringing to these shores many Jewish Socialists, Bundists, and trade-unionists. Today, the JLC serves as a conduit between the labor movement and the Jewish community, explaining trade-union issues to the community and Jewish concerns to the trade-union movement.

Among the moving spirits in the formation of the JLC were B. Charney Vladek, David Dubinsky, and Isaiah Minkoff. All of them have now died, though Minkoff died only recently and was involved in what I have to relate. . . .

When I first learned about Jack Eisner's funding of a commission to study and report on American Jewish efforts to save victims and potential victims of the Nazis, I contacted the president of the City University Graduate School and told him that in my judgment Isaiah Minkoff had a contribution to make and ought to be added to the commission. He referred me to Professor Finger of his faculty, who was heading the project, and who said he would see what could be done. Some few weeks later, I learned that Minkoff had been invited to participate in the work of the commission.

I asked Minkoff, after he had attended his first meeting, about the progress being made. To the best of my recollection, his answer was (although I cannot vouch for each and every word): "Nothing will come of it. There are members who want to use the report for political purposes, to condemn and embarrass mainline Jewish organizations, and to establish that only the Revisionist followers of Jabotinsky were sincerely active and interested in saving Jews." . . .

I tell this story now only to in-

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dicate how early in the work of the commission a politically knowledgeable and astute person was able to foresee the developments which Lucy S. Dawidowicz so ably describes in her article.

JULES KOLODNY
Professor Emeritus
New York University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Lucy S. Dawidowicz's incisive and timely analysis . . . justifiably criticizes Laurence Jarvik's film, *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?* Just prior to showing that film at the Chicago International Film Festival in November 1981, Jarvik published a "Personal View" on the op-ed page of the Chicago *Sun-Times* (subsequently published elsewhere, including the Los Angeles *Times*). The article is like the film, which Mrs. Dawidowicz accurately characterizes as "more propaganda than truth." In the article Jarvik claimed that during the Holocaust period, American Jewish organizations "dismissed some serious offers to free Jews without making even a cursory investigation of their validity." The article also described the frustrated efforts of Peter Bergson of the Irgun to set up a rescue program, and asked why those Jewish organizations who were critical of Bergson "didn't set up their own equivalent rescue organization."

In a letter published in the *Sun-Times* on November 29, 1981, I responded that such an organization did exist—the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee [JDC] which maintained its worldwide rescue operations throughout the Hitler period, as documented by Yehuda Bauer of the Hebrew University in his book, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Joint Distribution Committee 1939-1945*. My letter cited the still little-known example of Raoul Wallenberg's heroic rescue of 100,000 Hungarian Jews which was almost entirely financed by the JDC through its Swiss representative, Sali Mayer.

As for Jarvik's false claim that Jewish organizations refused to consider any ransom offer, I pointed out . . . Mayer's negotiations in 1944 with top Nazi officials, with the participation of the War Refugee Board, which prevented the deportation of thousands of Jews of Budapest and helped make possible the survival of 12,000 to 17,000 Hungarian Jews already in deportation. . . .

At the film festival I called to Jarvik's attention some of the facts about JDC's rescue efforts and gave him a copy of my letter to the *Sun-Times*. His reply to me stated:

> I certainly appreciate the efforts of the Joint Distribution Committee during World War II, and by no means intend to disparage the Joint's activities, then or today. What the film was investigating was the role of public political pressure and its effect on government policies. Since the Joint was and I presume still is a nonpartisan charitable organization, its activities were not the focus of the film. . . .

Nevertheless, in the February 9, 1983 report on the Jarvik film in the New York *Times* . . . Jarvik castigated the JDC as one of the Jewish organizations which refused his request for help with research. . . .

It was disappointing that the only apparent reference in Mrs. Dawidowicz's article to JDC's extensive wartime role was that, among other major omissions in the Jarvik film, there was nothing about "the money and supplies sent via direct and indirect channels to the beleaguered Jews of Europe." This is not to imply that Mrs. Dawidowicz is unaware of JDC's role. On the contrary, in her remarkable, now classic, book, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*, there are several specific references to JDC's emergency aid in Hitler-occupied Europe, especially in Poland and the Warsaw ghetto. Furthermore, she graciously acknowledges JDC's cooperation in making its files available to her.

Still, one would have hoped that, even within the space limitations of a COMMENTARY article, JDC's historical accomplishments—omitted from the Jarvik film, and thus far publicly by the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust—would have been brought directly to the reader's attention.

JDC's reputation is such that it may not need this kind of publicity, but it seems high time for the world to know these facts and especially about the men and women of JDC's European staff, many of whom were murdered by the Nazis, as they remained at their posts until the end. . . .

JAMES P. RICE
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I am far from cheered by the information, I still would like to thank Lucy S. Dawidowicz for providing the answer to a question posed by one of my sons a few months back. Why, he asked, was there no mention of the Holocaust in *Page One*, a collection of reproductions of about 300 New York *Times* front pages covering "major events" from 1920 through 1978? In looking through the collection, I saw the expected reports of war, floods, and famine, along with references to John Dillinger (of bank-robbing fame) and the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Simpson, whose troubles merited a three-line headline, but I found absolutely no coverage of the fate of European Jews. Not when the death camps were liberated and not even in the reports of the Nuremberg trials, in which the *Times* reporter wrote of "... testimony of the unprecedented horrors precipitated upon the world through the Nazi hierarchy. . . ." Auschwitz without Jews!

Having read Mrs. Dawidowicz's article, I no longer fault the editor of *Page One* for omitting a front page on the Holocaust. Clearly there wasn't one to include, the devastation of European Jewry being a non-event or at best a non-major event by *Times*'s standards.

Worse yet, I am not convinced that the *Times* has changed all that much. For weeks the paper's front pages carried stories on the Hitler diaries. Second-rate forgery and first-class greed are investigated and reported, and will probably appear in the next edition of *Page One*, along with an article on the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the expulsion of Jews from Nicaragua (a *Judenrein* nation in our own hemisphere!) barely rates an inside paragraph and the recent destruction of the Jewish business quarter in Salonika by anti-Semitic arsonists was never even mentioned. Not quite all the news that's fit to print. . . .

MAXINE L. WOLF
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to commend Lucy S. Dawidowicz for her intelligent critique of the current trend among some self-appointed "researchers" and special-interest groups to indict American Jews for their lack of response during World War II.

As one who grew up during the

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Hitler era, and experienced the cruel anti-Semitism of neighbors and former friends in the late 30's, I remember all too clearly the Nazi-inspired ravings of soapbox orators in my quiet, lower-middle-class neighborhood in Queens and the "We Serve Christians Only" signs in the windows of stores my mother had shopped in for a decade. The same fear of bodily injury and loss of position which motivated those tradesmen to accept those signs became part of the Jewish psyche as well. Although mass meetings protesting the Nazi horrors were organized in every community, a Jewish movement "to storm the White House" is a possibility which could only be dreamed up in retrospect.

Further confirmation of the political motivation rather than the historical authenticity of the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust comes from the picture of anti-Jewish activity in Florida during the late 30's and 40's, . . . based on research into the Jewish community of greater Miami. In addition to the social and residential discrimination against Jews, . . . overt pro-Nazi and actual Nazi propaganda was widespread. Vile leaflets were distributed by the Silver Shirts and White Front, and the German Society of Miami expressed its notion of ethnic pride by displaying a swastika at its March 1936 meeting. The activities of the anti-Semitic, fascist, semi-military White Front were . . . finally slowed in 1939 when its leader was convicted for disorderly conduct and breach of the peace.

Only strong community pressure on the part of the Anti-Defamation League, the AFL, the Seaman's Union, and other labor unions prevented the Hamburg American Line from establishing a ferry service between Key West and Havana in 1938. Previous experience had shown that whenever German ships were in Miami harbor, the area was filled with swaggering German sailors and flooded by anti-Semitic literature. In addition to local distribution, these subversive hate publications were sent to libraries all over the country by the German Library of Information, which operated with great success until it was shut down by presidential order in June 1941. It was only then that the University of Miami library removed the German Library of Information materials from general circulation. . . . Even as the United States entered the war in 1941, the Ku Klux Klan was engaged in distributing in Miami the discredited *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* as published in the Dearborn *Independent* in the 1920's. The war years saw a diminution of overt anti-Semitism, but as an editorial in the *Jewish Floridian* put it, for the Jewish community "it pays to be vigilant."

Not only did it pay, it was essential. We dare not distort history by reading into American Jewry of the 30's and 40's the self-assertiveness and strength which characterize the American Jewish community today. One could hardly expect the same kind of reactions from the traumatized, fearful Jewish community of . . . the late 30's and 40's that we witness today, thirty-five years after the founding of the state of Israel. Certainly the current indictment of the American Jewish response during World War II is as historically questionable as the misuse of the Holocaust is morally reprehensible.

GLADYS ROSEN
American Jewish Committee
New York City

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ writes:

My thanks first of all to Martha S. Cherkis, I. L. Kenen, Jules Kolodny, James P. Rice, Maxine L. Wolf, and Gladys Rosen for the reinforcement of history, reminiscence, and corroboration which their letters have given to my article.

In response to my critics on the Left, and in the light of Irving Howe's evidence from *Labor Action,* I admit that it was wrong to say "hardly any" leftist group "ever gave a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews." I should have said: "Some leftist groups gave a passing thought to the fate of the European Jews."

Of the eleven wartime items Irving Howe cites to show the solicitousness of the Schachtmanites for the Jews, none recorded the news about the mass murder of the European Jews which first became known in June 1942.

Yes, Mr. Howe, the editors of the *Jewish Frontier* put the news of Hitler's *plan* to annihilate all the European Jews in the back pages, but they filled the front pages of their journal with reports of the actual killings—in contrast to the Socialist groups who did not pay attention at all. As for the Jewish Labor Bund, I had supposed that Mr. Howe knew it was not an American Socialist organization but an émigré group whose existence was inextricably bound up with the fate of the Jews in Poland. Many Jewish Bundists whom I knew during the war held rather unflattering opinions of the American Socialists.

Charles Cogen has caught me in an error, which I'll gladly correct. Noman Thomas never became a member of the America First Committee, though he had been invited to join. But he spoke under its auspices more than once. Wayne C. Cole, the historian of American isolationism during World War II, in his book, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention 1940-1941,* writes that Norman Thomas "spoke at meetings sponsored by America First and made broadcasts and college-speaking tours which were financed, at least in part, by funds secured through the Committee."

Harry Fleischman demands my apology for having besmirched the memory of Norman Thomas. Instead, I'd like to quote a passage from Fleischman's own work, *Norman Thomas: A Biography,* which deals with Thomas's attitude toward Charles Lindbergh. At precisely the time most liberals and anti-Nazis considered Lindbergh an apologist for Hitler's Germany, "Thomas was convinced," Mr. Fleischman tells us, that Lindbergh "was a patriotic American who was the victim of an unscrupulous smear campaign." Even after Lindbergh made an openly anti-Semitic speech at an America First meeting on September 23, 1941, Thomas remained staunchly pro-Lindbergh, though of course he repudiated Lindbergh's anti-Jewish charges. Here's how Mr. Fleischman explains it: "Nevertheless, Thomas remained convinced that Colonel Lindbergh was not guilty of intentional anti-Semitism [*sic*] and resented the 'character assassination' in which many 'liberals' indulged."

The defense which Messrs. Howe and Findley offer on behalf of Leon Trotsky is touching. They cite Trotsky's seemingly prophetic phrase of 1939 about a future annihilation of the Jews. Trotsky died before the Third Reich had begun its systematic murder of the European Jews. Do Messrs. Howe and Findley really believe he had been vouchsafed a mystic foreglimpse of Germany's Final Solu-

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tion of the Jewish Question? I'm inclined to attribute that phrase of Trotsky's not to his extrasensory grasp of politics, but to his penchant for apocalyptic rhetoric.

Lenni Brenner denies that he echoes the Soviet-Arab line about "Zionist collusion with the Fascists and the Nazis." Maybe it's the other way around, and the Soviets echo *his* line. Just lately, in any event, *Izvestia,* the Soviet government newspaper, not customarily well-disposed to Trotskyites, gave Mr. Brenner's book a rave review. It was captioned: "Zionist Collaborationists: A Journalist Unmasks Dirty Deal with Nazi Chiefs."

Stanley P. Kessel's letter shows how history can be distorted by rage. In a fury against John Pehle (which he never explains), he writes that in November 1944 "reports of those who had escaped Auschwitz were now flooding his [Pehle's] War Refugee Board." "Flooding"? Escaping from Auschwitz was no everyday affair, and successful escapes were rare. Two Slovakian Jews who had managed to escape from Auschwitz in April 1944 and to return home wrote a detailed, documented account of the killing operations. Transmitted from Slovakia through underground channels, that report took a long time to reach the United States and the War Refugee Board. That was the only report—in summary and in toto—that "flooded" the War Refugee Board.

Some of my other critics, and most particularly Samuel Merlin, having discovered that I once thought better of the Irgunists than I do now, tax me for changing my mind. But I'd like to assure them it's not mere fickleness on my part. Further research and new evidence led me to a more accurate rendering of the past than the one I wrote when I had relied more fully upon Messrs. Bergson and Merlin for their version of those events.

Rafael Medoff and his cohorts are predators of history, who plunder the historical storehouse for just those "facts" which fit their political needs. But when they try to create historical evidence out of their "facts," they falsify history.

Take the Dickstein bill, for instance, which Mr. Medoff cites to support his claim that "in fact, at no time did the Jewish leadership press for elimination or even liberalization of the quotas." Mr. Medoff is right that the Jewish organizations opposed Dickstein's bill and asked him to withdraw it. But everything else Mr. Medoff says is wrong. Disentangling his account of that bit of history requires more space than the episode itself warrants, but it's instructive to see what the true story was.

To begin with, the Dickstein bill, introduced on March 22, 1933, had nothing at all to do with the quota system. It wasn't an immigration bill. In fact, it wasn't even a bill. It was just a congressional resolution. Congress was to ask the State Department to waive instructions which it had issued to American consular officials back in 1930, during the Hoover administration, advising them of the unemployment situation in the United States and requesting them to withhold visas from aliens likely to become public charges. Dick-

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stein's resolution, offered barely two months after Hitler had come to power, was intended to expedite the admission to the United States of relatives of American citizens who were victims of "religious and political persecution" by persuading consular officials that such aliens who had "close family ties" to Americans were not likely to become public charges. (*Pace* Mr. Medoff, Dickstein's bill was not drafted on behalf of "all German Jews related to American citizens." You don't have to be a constitutional lawyer to realize that such language goes against the grain of American law.) Still, public hearings were required before Congress could pass even such a toothless resolution.

The Jewish leaders believed that public debate at that time would hinder rather than help the Jewish interest. In their view, the State Department instructions of 1930 could be more expeditiously annulled through an executive order issued by the President or the State Department than by congressional intervention. It was a matter of tactics, not policy.

Philip Rosen challenges me to explain Hayim Greenberg's accusations against the Jewish leadership for its inability to act effectively and unitedly on behalf of the European Jews. I can do no better than to call as witness Marie Syrkin, Greenberg's colleague and friend in those days. In her article, "What American Jews Did During the Holocaust" (*Midstream*, October 1982), describing her own feelings and actions during the war, Miss Syrkin analyzed Greenberg's indictment. Unlike those who have exploited it by using only those passages which conform to their politics, Miss Syrkin sees it whole. After Greenberg had castigated all the Jewish organizations (including the Irgunists) as "bankrupt," he concluded with a lament of helplessness: "I confess that I am unable to draw concrete, practical conclusions from the above. If it is still objectively possible to do anything, then I do not know who should do it and how it should be done."

Greenberg's indictment of American Jewry was in fact, according to Miss Syrkin, "a searing confession of impotence." But that impotence was not produced by indifference to the fate of the Jews.

David S. Wyman refers to the nineteen years he has labored in the historical vineyards. In these nearly two decades he has produced one book and has a work still in progress. About two years ago, he read a paper based on that work, from which Mr. Merlin is understandably pleased to quote; and no wonder, for Mr. Wyman mouthed the Irgun line whole. As Laurence Jarvik informs us, Mr. Wyman is a booster for the Irgun version of American Jewish history. How ironic that he's the one to charge me with bias.

Mr. Merlin, having failed to answer the fundamental question I posed regarding the six-month silence of the Irgunists after news of the murder of the European Jews became known, resorts to name-calling and tiresomely rehashes the Irgun line. He may be disappointed to know that I am familiar with the Morgenthau diaries. Indeed, a close reading of those records started me on the search that led to the Cox papers which are at the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park. That's how I discovered that Oscar Cox, then in the Lend-Lease administration, and Milton Handler, who worked with him, had been involved in these matters. It was their draft of an executive order to establish a War Refugee Board which Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. took to President Roosevelt on January 16, 1944, and which Roosevelt approved after suggesting one change. I believe that these Cox papers constitute satisfactory evidence that the Irgun-sponsored resolution was not linked to the creation of the War Refugee Board. Before I found these records, our sources were only the immodest claims of the Irgunists.

Seymour Maxwell Finger's letter overflows with irrelevancies and inconsequentialities. One personal matter: he misquotes me and then says I lied. I never wrote, as he claims, that *he* invited me to join the Academic Review Committee; I wrote: "I was invited." The invitation had been extended on the phone by the director of CUNY's Institute for Holocaust Studies, who was also the senior member of the Academic Review Committee.

That "a number of major Jewish organization officials have praised the draft" is an astonishing piece of information, even more astonishing than Mr. Finger's claim that none of the organizations criticized the draft. The letters from Messrs. Rice and Kolodny surely challenge this bluster. Other agency officials I know have been outraged by the report.

Mr. Finger is also reticent about developments within the commission. *Item:* One member of the commission, a distinguished attorney, resigned weeks before my article was published on the ground that he was unwilling to sign a report whose contents and documentation he had no time to review. *Item:* Three months ago, an eminent lawyer, not a commission member, who had himself been involved in the events under review, submitted to the commission a lengthy and highly critical analysis of the report, to which Mr. Finger has not, as of now, responded. *Item:* A member of the commission who is an official of a Jewish agency resigned from the commission because Mr. Finger failed to act on his recommended changes in the scope and emphasis of the commission's research plans.

Mr. Finger now appears to be transforming the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust into a historical society. But the most recent version of the draft report which he defends lacks historical substance as well as chronological coherence. It has a long way to go before it can claim to be a systematic presentation of the relevant events set in the context of the times.

Last spring Mr. Finger sent me, at my request, a list of research papers which he had commissioned. Seven were studies of Jewish organizations, one of the Bermuda Conference, and another of "prominent Jews." The researchers had recently completed doctoral dissertations or published articles on their assigned topics. Thus Mr. Finger is acquiring a large body of recycled research. Three other studies, to be prepared by Israelis, belong to the What-Might-Have-Been school of history: could the Jews have been rescued from Rumania, Hungary, and Slovakia?

An experienced historian would have commissioned a critical review of the existing literature. But that wouldn't have sufficed either. Doing history, even by committee, is more than commissioning papers. To begin with, one needs to conceptualize the subject under study. On the assumption that Mr. Finger has discarded Mr. Merlin's original premises about the passivity and indifference of American Jews, one is curious indeed to know what are his working hypotheses.

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Night descends, prayers begin, the candles lit,
apples dipped in honey, rounded challah loaves,
the shofar sounds, the circle is completed.

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The absence of a conceptual framework accounts for the failure to take up a number of fundamental issues. For instance, charges have been frequently leveled against the Jewish organizations for their lack of unity. Mr. Finger's studies of individual agencies won't provide the answer to that question. Perhaps he should commission a paper on the cooperative body called the Joint Emergency Committee on European Jewish Affairs which existed during the most critical months of the period under review and of which he seems ignorant.

Another example of Mr. Finger's failure to conceptualize his subject matter is the absence of material on the political, economic, and social climate in the United States and the impact on the Jewish community of unemployment, xenophobia, isolationism, neutrality, anti-Semitism, anti-Communism, and even pro-Nazism in some parts of the country. After all, the Jewish leaders and their organizations did not live in a vacuum.

Then there's the question of periodization. What time span is under review and how is it to be subdivided? Clearly the goals, resources, problems, obstacles, and options of the Jewish leaders and their institutions varied from one time segment to another. Immigration policy, welfare and relief, refugee care, and finally political action for rescue have different timetables, all of which need to be correlated not only with the rapidly deteriorating situation of the European Jews but also with national and world events, including the course of the war.

Finally, a matter of philosophic import. Mr. Finger hasn't grasped the fundamental difference between the nature of legal judgments and the nature of historical ones. The historian makes implicit and explicit moral judgments as he orders his evidence to construct an account of the past. In that process, he assigns responsibility to his historical actors. But such moral assessments do not qualify him as a hanging judge.

Orwell

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Orwell in Perspective" [March] Herb Greer likens *1984* to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the basis of an alleged similarity of the political effects rather than by demonstrating any genuine understanding of Orwell's book. *1984* is not merely a slightly sentimental and melodramatic polemic against oppression; it operates on a more profound moral level which seems to have eluded Mr. Greer.

In casting around for comparisons with *1984* the most obvious place to begin is with the peculiarly 20th-century genre of dystopian fiction, for example Zamyatin's *We* or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. It is especially illuminating to draw a contrast with the latter. Secure in the English upper classes, . . . the worst kind of world Huxley can imagine is one in which science reigns triumphant and all values are annihilated except for the utilitarian pursuit of pleasure. Huxley's . . . vision nevertheless lacks Orwell's dramatic intensity because the nature of the values at stake is radically different. In Huxley's world we have lost the values of an aesthete; in Orwell's we lose our very humanity.

For instance, compare Huxley's Shakespeare-spouting Savage to the commonplace Winston Smith whose idea of the good life is both tender and fallen: something to eat, no nosey neighbors, a chance to take his girlfriend to bed. In thwarting Smith the political system of *1984* thwarts values essential to our being human, very basic and very precious notions like honesty, personal integrity, love, and tenderness. It is a vision all the more terrible because these values are systematically and deliberately eradicated. Mr. Greer mentions Orwell's "hatred of oppression," but he is silent on the deeper issue, the destruction of our very humanity, which generates the book's all-pervading sense of despair. He fails to see that Orwell is concerned with the threat to us as moral beings represented both by totalitarianism and by our machine civilization (it is no accident that two-way television plays an important role in domination, and is not, as Mr. Greer implies, a mere stage prop). Thus to complain that Orwell did not fully understand the mechanisms of totalitarianism is like condemning *Animal Farm* because pigs do not speak.

To represent *1984* as either a polemic against oppression or as a political treatise is equally mistaken. It is an essay in myth-creation, where myth is understood as embodying the fears, aspirations, and moral concerns of its age. Someone who could find nothing wrong with *Brave New World* would not perhaps be a very likable person, would have the wrong values at heart, whereas someone who did not find the moral corruption of *1984* abhorrent would be inhuman. The essence of this difference Mr. Greer fails to comprehend. . . .

Michael Taylor
Brasenose College
Oxford, England

Herb Greer writes:

Michael Taylor's letter makes me hesitate and consider Proverbs 26:4, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him," a text cited more than once by George Orwell. But he also quoted Proverbs 26:5, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Mr. Taylor's remarks are such a perfect example of the academic bosh referred to in my piece that I should like to comment on them.

George Orwell was a journalist, essayist, and novelist. He liked to debunk myths, and was not in the business of making them. Myths are the hobby (sometimes the métier) of people like Mr. Taylor who build them with fake language, like "idea of the good life . . . both tender and fallen," and with vague rhetoric about values. *1984* is emphatically not about "the destruction of our very humanity." On the contrary, it portrays in melodramatic and exaggerated form a phenomenon which is all too human, both in our century and in earlier times: the oppression of a dissenter and his final conversion to the faith of his oppressors. I observed that the mechanisms of this process in the novel were only a superficial match with the totalitarianism we know in real life. This is because most citizens in most totalitarian countries are not dissenters; they actually accept and support their governments. Thus the common people, sentimentally idealized by Orwell, are an important part of the totalitarian "mechanism"—perhaps the most important part. Orwell did not understand this very well, which is one principal reason why *1984*, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, lurches so far into maudlin melodrama. It goes far deeper than Mr. Taylor's inapposite non sequitur about talking pigs. There are other reasons, but this is not the place for yet another essay on this much-discussed novel.

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Mr. Taylor is of course free to compare *1984* with whatever he likes. I confess to finding his own scale of values a trifle particular. E.g., Huxley's Savage and Winston Smith are both loving, tender, honest, and possessed of personal integrity, as I am sure Mr. Taylor will agree. However, by Mr. Taylor's account, Winston Smith is limited in his tastes to gluttony, lechery, and an understandable itch for privacy. Apparently he sees this as superior to the Savage's love of Shakespeare. Ah, well—*chacun à son goût*.

I would guess that Mr. Taylor has been sucking up rather a lot of bad criticism, mostly from mythmakers, while paying little attention to original texts. Otherwise (to give one example) he might have stumbled across a grown-up edition of *Gulliver's Travels* and discovered that there is nothing "peculiarly 20th-century" about dystopic fiction. It would seem that the professors at Brasenose College have quite a job on their hands.

E.P. Thompson

To the Editor of Commentary:

How the Kremlin must be chortling over Scott McConnell's attack on E.P. Thompson ["The 'Neutralism' of E.P. Thompson," April]. I don't know if he wrote the article before seeing the abuse heaped on European Nuclear Disarmament [END], the organization Thompson helped found, by the official Soviet Peace Committee. The committee sent a letter to some 150 peace organizations in the West saying that the insistence of Thompson and END on linking arms with human rights in Eastern Europe was inadmissible and part of imperialist counterrevolutionary strategy.

To be put down publicly by both the Kremlin and Commentary in the space of six months is an honor that falls to few, but I suspect it is one that E.P. Thompson cherishes.

Incidentally, contrary to what Mr. McConnell alleges, END did make contact with Solidarity, as I can testify from personal experience. There was nothing that Solidarity wanted to do more than call publicly, openly, for Soviet troops and weapons to be removed from Poland. But every well-meaning friend from the West, Left and Right, told the Polish union that to do so would be an act of the highest political irresponsibility; so, in order to avoid provoking the Russians, the Poles kept quiet on the number-one subject in the country. END cannot win. If Solidarity had discussed END's ideas for a de-superpowered Europe, the union would have been accused of irresponsibility. By staying silent Solidarity can be later invoked by the McConnells of the world as being hostile to END. . . .

In the end it doesn't perhaps matter whether you accept Mr. McConnell's version that Thompson is either an unwitting, or foolish, or cynical tool of Soviet imperialism or the Kremlin's argument that he is a closet CIA agent. What Thompson has tried to do is take the argument beyond how we should defend our freedom in Western Europe and extend it to the question of what are the ways for gaining freedom for the people of Eastern Europe. Personally I don't share his apocalyptic vision of a nuclear war being just around the corner. Reagan and Andropov are too cynical and opportunistic for that. But I do agree with him that the massive stacking up of nuclear weapons and troops in Europe since 1945 has not advanced the cause of democracy one whit.

The supreme selfishness of those who criticize Thompson for his polemics against both superpowers is that our freedom must always be paid for by the continuing lack of freedom for Poles, Czechoslovakians, Hungarians, etc. Thompson may be wrong and naive in some of what are, after all, tentative proposals, but he is right to link armaments, human rights, and political freedom, and right to include the whole of Europe in the debate.

Denis MacShane
Geneva, Switzerland

Scott McConnell writes:

The cordial and accommodating reply by END to the letter of the Soviet Peace Committee would only have reinforced my argument about the dubious nature of E.P. Thompson's and END's neutralism. In its response to the Soviets, END protested that the Russians had misunderstood its position; it did not propagate the notion that the two superpowers shared "equal responsibility" for the arms race, but rather had consistently sought to show that the West "at almost every step of the road" had "taken the lead in the development of this sort of weaponry." END added that it considered the American and NATO defense posture "more dangerous and aggressive in the current period." END assured the Soviets that it would continue to work for the breakup of both military blocs and a "community of European nations—a community within which the Soviet Union will have a rightful and influential part."

In my article I stated that despite Thompson's grandiloquent claims about the fraternity of the Western anti-nuclear movement and Solidarity, END did not in fact contact Solidarity during its legal life span. The British *Guardian* of August 3, 1982 reported END's "first official contact with Solidarity" in Brussels. Actually this meeting was with Solidarity's Coordinating Office Abroad; by the time END did actually meet with Solidarity representatives, most of the union's leaders had been languishing in detention camps in Poland for seven months. At this meeting, according to the *Guardian*, Solidarity's representatives did not endorse END's proposal for a nuclear-free Europe from Poland to Portugal.

If I thought that my article had induced those in the Kremlin to chortle more and terrorize their neighbors less, I would be delighted.

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Democracy for Everyone?

Peter L. Berger

On June 8, 1982, in a speech to the British Parliament, President Reagan called for a "global campaign for democracy." In a key passage he said: "The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy—the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities—which allows a people to choose their own way, to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means."

This presidential initiative both legitimated earlier efforts to use American government resources for the promotion of democracy abroad and launched a new effort directed at the same end. The most important such effort has been the project to create a National Endowment for Democracy, a new institution that would draw on the two major political parties as well as on organized labor, the business community, and possibly other private institutions. Bearing some resemblance to the political *Stiftungen* of West Germany, the Endowment would give assistance and advice to democratic parties and movements abroad, and especially in the Third World. At the same time, the United States Information Agency (USIA) has been directed by the administration to intensify its presentation of democratic ideas and realities.

The issue of the advocacy of democracy has thus acquired a new timeliness. That issue has a number of political and ideological aspects. It is clearly related to the concern, shared by many people at different points along the political spectrum, that this country needs a new sense of itself and its mission in the world. There is also the conviction that despite (or because of) recent tensions, the countries of the Western Alliance need a rallying point for their common democratic values, which, after all, constitute the only durable foundation of the Alliance. Then there is the need to define a Western stance in the face of the Soviet Union and its use of Marxist ideology in the service of its imperial purposes.

In addition to each of these facets, there is the North/South dimension of the issue. Specifically, there is the question of the manner in which democracy can or should be advocated to non-Western societies—precisely those societies, notably in Asia and Africa, where one cannot readily presuppose a commonality of values of the kind the United States shares with Europe and (at least in the educated classes) with Latin America. Is democracy so closely intertwined with specifically Western values that to advocate it in non-Western societies is futile, or undesirable, or both?

President Reagan addressed himself to this question in his speech. Immediately after stating the objective quoted above, he went on:

> This is not cultural imperialism; it is providing the means for genuine self-determination and protection for diversity. Democracy already flourishes in countries with very different cultures and historical experiences. It would be cultural condescension, or worse, to say that any people prefer dictatorship to democracy.

In view of the history of this century, both in the West and elsewhere, the President's final sentence may be somewhat over-optimistic; after all, there is indeed the phenomenon that Erich Fromm (referring primarily to Nazism) called "the escape from freedom," and that Jean-François Revel (referring to the apparently ineradicable sympathy of Western intellectuals for dictatorships of the Left) has described as "the totalitarian temptation." Be that particular point as it may, however, the assertion that to champion the spread of democracy does not constitute cultural imperialism requires further elaboration.

On the face of it, there is a certain resemblance here to the debate over human rights during the Carter administration. There is a similar concern for the American self-image, for the ideological underpinnings of the Western Alliance, and for the proper definition of the contest with the Soviet Union; and there are similar questions about cultural relativity and ethnocentrism.* But it is important to stress that the issue of democracy, or of political rights altogether, is not the same as the issue of human rights. For there are fundamental human rights that are not in themselves political—

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* See my article, "Are Human Rights Universal?," COMMENTARY, September 1977.

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such as, for instance, the right to the free exercise of religion. Although in practice a very high correlation exists between human rights and democracy (a point I will return to below), in principle they are discrete phenomena. For this reason, we must be clear what we mean by the term "democracy."

In defining democracy, American political scientists have tended to emphasize the institutional as against the ideological aspect. They see democracy as a specific set of institutions and processes rather than as a set of ideas. This is useful, since it limits discussion to the political sphere proper, leaving aside the questions (interesting though they may be) of "democratization" in other spheres (the family, work, education, and so forth). It also leaves aside the subject of democracy as an ideological creed or philosophy. The political scientist Myron Weiner probably expresses a wide consensus among his professional colleagues when he says that the following four characteristics are essential to democracy as a political process: governments are chosen in competitive elections in which there are opposition parties; parties, including those in opposition, have the right openly to seek public support, a right that must include access to the press, freedom of speech and assembly, and protection against arbitrary arrest; electorally defeated governments step down and the losers are not punished unless they have violated laws, in which case they are protected by due process; and elected governments really govern and are not figureheads for non-elected elites.

One might add to or subtract from this list, but it clearly points to the essentials of democracy as a political process. Nor is it an oversimplification to say that all these characteristics express an all-important principle—namely, the institutionalized limitation of the power of government. Democracy seeks to insure that the rascals are periodically kicked out and that, while they are in, there are certain things they may not do.

Now, not even the most enthusiastic proponent of the universality of democracy can deny that this particular "package" of institutional arrangements has highly specific roots in Western history and is linked to specific Western social developments (such as Roman law, medieval guilds, Protestant churches) as well as to specific Western values (the ethics of Judaism and Christianity, the Enlightenment, the ethos of entrepreneurship, and so on). The question may then be put quite simply: how does this "package" apply to societies rooted in very different social developments and animated by very different values? Can democracy plausibly be advocated in such societies? Should it be? And if so, in what terms?

THESE questions are not new. In the current debate one may distinguish two viewpoints, both originating in earlier periods of American history and both legitimated in the name of American political ideals.

There is, first, the view that the values of democracy are universal, deriving from human nature itself, and therefore that the United States should support and advocate these values everywhere, as well as the institutions founded on them. Interestingly, this view may be found both on the Right and on the Left within the American political spectrum.

Then there is the contrary view, again found on both Right and Left. According to it, American democracy is contingent upon specific values that are *not* universal, and the United States cannot and indeed should not try to propagate democracy indiscriminately in all places. Cannot, because the project is unrealistic; should not, because to do so is ethnocentric arrogance.

Curiously, both viewpoints are grounded in affirmations of the "American Creed"—the former in its emphatic universalism (the Declaration of Independence speaks of "all men"), the latter in its tradition of respect for human differences (American pluralism). The two viewpoints appear frequently in somewhat crude forms—in the one case, manifesting what could be called a "vulgar" Wilsonianism; in the other case, manifesting a masochistic denigration of one's own culture. These have well-known antecedents in American history. The vulgar Wilsonian who insists that the whole world is destined to become democratic in the Western sense is a secularized reincarnation of all those missionaries who draped Mother Hubbards over the bosoms of Polynesian maidens newly won to Methodism or Congregationalism. The denigrator of American values stands in apostolic succession to a long line of pilgrims, expatriates, and tourists-gone-native.

These are extreme types, easily caricatured. But this does not mean that they do not walk around in the flesh. They do; the Christian churches of America, which used to produce the missionaries, now produce a lot of the masochists, and they deserve every possible caricature. Nevertheless, some of the ideas underlying the two opposing viewpoints cannot be dismissed out of hand. The first view embodies the correct insight that the most deeply held values always imply universality: I cannot claim inalienable rights as a human being without thereby implying that the same rights belong to every other human being. The second view also embodies a correct insight—that human cultures do in fact differ in their values, even very basic ones, and that Western democracy has grown out of a highly distinctive cultural history: I cannot assume that my own values are shared by people of other cultures, or that the "American Creed" will be as self-evident in Ibadan as it is in Indianapolis.

Cultural relativity, in other words, is an undeniable empirical fact. One of the main effects of modern social science, indeed, has been to make this fact widely known, certainly here and in Europe. Pascal's dictum, that what is truth on one

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side of the Pyrenees is error on the other, was revolutionary when he uttered it in the 17th century; today it has become a staple of popular consciousness. No viable approach to the problem of democracy in the contemporary world can bypass this widespread knowledge of relativity.

Yet if the "vulgar Wilsonian" position underestimates cultural relativity, the anti-Wilsonian position overestimates it. The aim should be to formulate a more nuanced middle-ground position, one that is intellectually defensible and politically practical. This is by no means an impossible agenda.

PRECISELY which Western values are basic to democracy? Inevitably the focus falls on the set of values loosely called "individualism," however vague and even slighty pejorative the term may sound. Western democracy has been founded on a specific understanding of the individual as an autonomous being. This understanding means that the individual has a capacity for freedom, for realizing himself in the course of his actions, and that he has inherent rights over and against the demands (or, for that matter, the rights) of any community to which he may belong.

It is not very difficult to trace the source of these notions in the convergence of two cultural streams: the first originating in biblical religion, with Protestantism playing a decisive role in its application to political democracy; the second rooted in the Hellenic view of man, transmitted to modernity via the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and applied to the invention of democratic institutions by the French Revolution and its successors. Obviously, these cultural streams have failed to affect non-Western societies in the same way; indeed, in most of the latter they have begun to have an impact only rather recently, and as a result of Western expansion.

But just as democracy is an idea that manifests itself in concrete institutions and social processes, so the autonomous individual is not only an idea but a lived experience. Actual human beings must feel themselves to be autonomous, to be free or aspiring to freedom, to have inherent rights. For such experience to be possible, specific processes of socialization must take place, beginning in early childhood. These processes too require an institutional framework; the "bourgeois family" of the modern West was a key institution in forming the sort of individuals for whom democracy could be a plausible project.

Thus it is not just a matter of Asians or Africans not holding certain ideas. More importantly, it is a matter of their not having had the experiences through which these ideas become plausible or "real" in actual life. In this sense, Western individualism is a deviation from the "common human pattern" (to use a concept coined by Jan Romein). It is so perceived by many non-Westerners. (The fact that Western individualism has also been challenged from within Western culture, notably by Marxism and other collectivist ideologies, further complicates the situation.)

The unusual assumptions of Western individualism become sharply evident as soon as one compares them with what is taken for granted in the great majority of non-Western cultures, in all parts of the world, and indeed in the traditional substrata of Western societies as well, such as in the remaining peasant cultures of Southern Europe. In Latin America, Western individualism frequently amounts to a thin veneer over totally different Indo-American or Afro-American cultures with a deeply communal, non-individualistic character. In Africa, the veneer is even thinner, due to the briefer and more superficial experience with the West. But it is in Asia, with its ancient and highly sophisticated civilizations, that the alien quality of Western individualism is most clearly evident.

ASIA is the most important testing ground for many assumptions about modernity. It can be argued that there is in Asia a "second case" of modernity in the making, one which is not a simple extension of the Western case. Its clear center is Japan, though it now also includes the newly industrialized countries of the "Asian Rim" (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore) and is radiating further (especially into the ASEAN countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand). These societies lack the Western history of individualism. Yet some of them have developed democratic institutions. Japan and India are the most important cases, and they can serve to test many assumptions about an allegedly necessary connection among modernization, democracy, and the values of Western individualism.

Now, modernization changes *all* cultures, and individualism has indeed been one of the more successful cultural exports of the West. It would be foolish to expect all Asians to be guided by traditional communal values. In Japan, for example, there is much evidence of the inroads of individualistic values (a fact that may have far-reaching social consequences in the future). Also, the West itself has been changing. Strong anti-individualistic tendencies are at work there, and not only of the political sort; witness the counterculture and the rise of charismatic religious movements. But the point is that in most if not all non-Western societies, there is an "audience" for Western individualistic values. To this "audience," democracy can be advocated in exactly the same terms that one would employ in America or Europe. By and large, this audience is made up of those who have undergone a modern education on the secondary or university levels.

Yet even in these strata there have been neotraditionalist movements, some of them rejecting modernity outright, most of them advocating

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modifications of modernity in line with indigenous values, as expressed in the slogan, "modernization without Westernization." These movements are particularly powerful in the Islamic world, but they exist elsewhere as well. There is a Shinto revival in Japan, there are strong neotraditional movements in Hinduism, and there is a rapid growth of indigenous Christian churches in Africa. Thus there exist not only continuing, and in some places vast, traditional sectors of society that have been relatively untouched by Western values. There also exist significant groups that have turned away from the Western values once espoused by themselves or their parents.

Does this then mean that in non-Western countries democracy can plausibly be advocated only to "converts" to Western values? Or can it also be advocated to those who either continue to live by traditional values or have newly returned to such values? I believe the answers to these two questions are, respectively, no and yes.

QUITE apart from its relation to positive values or ideals, democracy is, under modern conditions, the only practical alternative to unrestrained tyranny. There is scarcely a human society that would defend the absence of *any* restraints on the actions of rulers. "Tyranny" is a universal pejorative. The issue is how tyranny is to be prevented.

In traditional societies, there are various countervailing forces to tyranny, sometimes institutionalized. For example, in old China there were the Imperial Censors—Confucian officials whose job it was to monitor and if necessary reprimand the authorities, including the emperor himself, in the name of the accepted norms of political conduct. The Brahmans, the priestly caste of India, played a somewhat comparable role in that society. In other cases the function was fulfilled in a more informal manner, through non-governmental institutions such as kinship, tribe, priesthood, and the like, which imposed limits on what rulers could do.

But in pre-modern times the most important constraint on government was the sheer inefficiency of its reach. Even the most despotic empire of earlier times simply lacked the means to extend its power uniformly and steadily throughout the area supposedly under its sway. Away from the capital city and a few other political centers, many people lived their lives untouched by government, and perhaps ignorant of its existence.

By contrast, even "soft states" today, because of modern technology, have a vastly augmented power to project themselves into every nook and cranny of society. At the same time, modernization tends to weaken the traditional institutions that used to counterbalance government. The social functions of kinship shrink and extended kinship ties weaken; tribal allegiances become less compelling; priesthoods are undermined by secularization; and so on. All this greatly increases the chances for tyranny—not because rulers have become more wicked, but because, if they are wicked, they are in a much better position to carry out their nefarious designs.

What sort of institutional arrangements can one imagine that would reimpose constraints on the immensely powerful entity known as the modern state? What would be the "fundamental equivalents" of Imperial Censors? The answer is: arrangements similar to those embodied in Western democracy—institutionalized restraints on the powers of government, provisions for orderly succession, guarantees for critics of government actions, independent custodians of law and morality, and so on.

Put differently, *if democracy did not exist, one would have to invent it.* Or, in the language of advocacy: say all you want about your unwillingness to accept Western values, about your desire to pursue independent and indigenous paths of development—unless you want untrammeled tyranny, there is no alternative to democracy.

It is here that the correlation between democracy and human rights becomes particularly relevant. Leaving aside political rights (like the right to vote or to speak freely) that may be deemed culturally relative, there are fundamental human rights that all or nearly all human societies recognize: the right of an individual not to be subjected to arbitrary and cruel punishment by his own rulers in the absence of any crime; the right of parents to keep their children; the right of people to go on living in the place of their birth; and so on. If one traces offenses against these rights on a map of the world, the democracies will show very few entries. Governments that arbitrarily imprison, torture, or kill their own people, that separate parents from their childen, and that engage in massive involuntary "transfers of population," are very rarely democracies. It is not hard to see why. Although in theory it is possible to imagine benevolent despots, respectful of human rights and devoted to the welfare of their subjects, in practice despotism is rarely or only intermittently benevolent, at least under modern conditions. If one is concerned with human rights, under any conceivably credible definition of that term, the only reliable guarantee lies in the institutions of democracy.

It may be argued that the requirements of economic development make the necessity of democracy less compelling. At least in the short run, there have been non-democratic regimes with impressive records of economic development, such as in the countries of the Asian Rim. Yet the evidence does not allow anyone to assert that "development dictatorships" are a necessary or invariable condition of economic progress. The record of most such regimes is quite depressing—in the case of the socialist ones, it is uniformly dismal. By contrast, there are democracies with impressive

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economic records (Sri Lanka has been a good example).

An argument can be made, in fact, that if economic development is successful, pressures toward democracy begin to build up (South Korea). Not that democracy is to be advocated merely as a means to the end of economic development; both democracy and development are human desiderata, each on its own. To defend either it is not necessary to argue that one leads inevitably to the other. Democracy is a good in and of itself.

Moreover, the desirability of democracy cannot be weakened by saying that it is of little interest to the poor. For one thing, every contemporary democracy was once poor. For another, it is precisely the poor in every country who have the greatest stake in protections against tyranny. Democracy is not a "luxury of the rich," as has been argued; the rich, with or without democracy, usually manage to take care of themselves.

IF DEMOCRACY is indeed a political structure to safeguard the rights and liberties of the individual, it also happens to offer the most plausible structure for the protection of traditional values.

The state is not the only threat to traditional values. Other modern institutions and processes—the forces of the market and of technology, modern urban life, mass communications—create their own threats. But the state is the most potent threat.

Take the case of education, virtually everywhere today a state monopoly, pressed on everyone despite frequent resistance. Ivan Illich has proposed that the school is the church of modernity, and in most countries today it is an "established" church, controlled by government and imposed on people by the police powers of government if necessary. Let it be quickly stipulated that government education is not necessarily bad, and that both democracy and economic development require an educational infrastructure. Nevertheless, those with allegiance to traditional values correctly perceive the state educational system as a major threat to these values. How can they minimize it? Once more, the most effective brake on the untrammeled power of educators to impose their own values on everyone lies in the institutions of democracy.

The most practical way to protect tradition is to limit the powers of the state. In non-democratic regimes, traditional groups are "obstacles to progress," to be manipulated or coerced as policy requires; in a democracy, they are members of an electorate. Democracy as an institutional mechanism, especially if it is limited to the political sphere, is not in itself inimical to traditional values. On the contrary, a democratic polity allows "breathing space" to traditional values and institutions. One need only compare the benign fate of tradition in the democracies of India and Japan with the ruthless suppression it undergoes in China or even in some of the milder authoritarian regimes of Asia.

Thus, in many situations, protecting the rights of individuals against the state is tantamount also to protecting the rights of tradition—more precisely, of those individuals who desire to continue living in traditional ways. Democracy fosters pluralism and coexistence, including coexistence between modernized and more traditional sectors of society.

IN ADDITION to all this, democracy is the most practical method for safeguarding those "mediating structures" that are, themselves, the matrix of democracy.

By mediating structures I mean institutions that both give shape to people's private identities and also help them relate to the large structures of a modern society. These institutions exist both in highly modern and in less developed societies, and they are very important in both. Some of them continue to be traditional in character or (especially in the West) have undergone modernizing modifications. The most important of these are the family, organized religion, and the structures of local community. Others are such innovations as cooperatives, labor unions, and other associations to protect or promote particular interests. Virtually everywhere in the world, people have a strong interest in these institutions, because their most precious values and self-identifications are closely bound to them.

Whether one speaks of more or of less modernized populations, the protection of mediating structures is an urgent popular concern. Here too the major threat comes from the state, and here too democratic limitations of state power are a beneficial answer.

Development strategies that run roughshod over these institutions are likely to founder and/or become increasingly tyrannical. A major cause of the downfall of the Shah of Iran, Grace Goodell has argued, was the repressive manner in which his regime, in the name of development and modernization, dealt with the "natural" mediating structures of Iranian society. By contrast, the success of Japan may have much to do with the creative manner in which intermediate institutions were preserved in the course of modernization.

Mediating structures prevent individuals from falling into the *anomie* or "alienation" that is one of the high costs of modernization, and also insure that government retains a connection with the values by which ordinary people live. For this reason, they are crucial to the legitimacy of all large political structures and especially of government. Mediating structures are also the sociological soil from which political democracy, if absent today, may grow tomorrow. And here, on this point, the distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes is highly relevant.

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Totalitarian states, by their very nature, cannot tolerate even the relative independence of such institutions. They must be leveled, controlled, and integrated into the all-embracing polity. Authoritarian regimes usually do not operate under this compulsion. Once they are in a position to control political opposition, they frequently permit various mediating structures—family, religion, local community, even cooperatives and other economic interest groupings—to function relatively autonomously. In this way, even unintentionally, they permit institutions to exist that form a potential matrix for a future democracy.

It is in itself good if the state does not seek to interfere in the family or religious life of its people, or if it allows them to band together for the pursuit of economic interests. But beyond this immediate good, there is also the strong possibility that this kind of participation will eventually lead to pressures for political participation—and, just as important, will accustom people to social practices that are indispensable to the workings of democracy.

THE day when Westerners could go to Asia or Africa and, missionary-like, proclaim the supremacy of Western culture with unabashed self-assurance is well past. The last major nation of Western provenance that still practices "cultural imperialism" of the 19th-century type is the Soviet Union, and its successes, such as they are, may be credited to fear of Soviet power rather than to the persuasive force of Soviet values. Those who represent Western democracy have, by contrast, every reason to be interested in the great dialogue among cultures that is as yet only a promise, but an enormously exciting and challenging promise, of the modern age.

If the day of the missionary is past, one is less certain that the day of the self-denigrating pilgrim is also past; but it should be. Those who come into dialogue with non-Western cultures in a stance of uncritical admiration for what they find there, and of masochistic disavowal of their own cultural heritage, are unlikely to obtain a serious hearing and deserve none. A reasoned stand for the human achievements of Western civilization, including the monumental achievements of political democracy, is long overdue. Just possibly the current discussion may contribute to a wider reaffirmation of Western values.

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The Greatness of Gershom Scholem

Hyam Maccoby

GERSHOM SCHOLEM, who died two years ago, produced such a far-reaching revolution in our understanding of Judaism that his work cannot yet be assessed in its entirety. As the foremost Jewish scholar of our age, the author of numerous pathbreaking books and essays (among the best-known in English being *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, The Messianic Idea in Judaism,* and *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*), he radically revised, and gave fresh life to, the entire field of Jewish studies. At the same time, the new insights which he brought to his reading of Jewish experience and ideology required, and have resulted in, a reorientation of all thoughtful Jews to their own tradition and to the implications of their religious history. A brilliantly panoptic mind, a true "master thinker," Scholem represented a force in the intellectual life of our century, and not only in Jewish intellectual life, whose influence will be felt for a long time to come.

I

BORN in 1897 into an assimilated German-Jewish family in Berlin, Scholem as a youngster showed talent in mathematics and philosophy and seemed destined for a conventional university career. He rebelled, however, against the bourgeois ambitions of his parents; similarly, he refused to adopt the Germanic values which inspired so many of his contemporaries. His brother, also a rebel, became a Communist, but the young Gerhard (as he was then called) became a Zionist, and planned to emigrate to Palestine. His Zionism changed the direction of his studies: he determined to master the cultural past of the Jewish people, and addressed himself with sober single-mindedness to the acquisition of Hebrew and Aramaic and to the study of the classical literature of the Bible and Talmud. He soon became fascinated by Jewish mysticism, a subject generally regarded in German-Jewish academic circles with contempt, as so much unintelligible and primitive gibberish, unworthy of scholarly investigation. In later life, Scholem often told the story of how as a young man he visited Philip Bloch, the only Jewish scholar in Germany who had a collection of kabbalistic books and manuscripts. After admiring the manuscripts, Scholem (then in his early twenties) said, "How nice, Herr Professor, that you've studied all this!" The venerable Bloch replied, "What! Am I supposed to *read* this rubbish, too?"

Scholem himself soon began collecting kabbalistic books, acquiring some very rare ones at dirt-cheap prices. But unlike Bloch, he read them all, and soon made himself into an expert on the subject of Jewish mysticism. He switched his university studies to Oriental languages, and eventually produced, as his doctoral thesis and his first scholarly effort, *Das Buch Bahir* (Berlin, 1923), a translation, with notes, of the mysterious book *Bahir*, the earliest extant kabbalistic work. Here began Scholem's massive reconsideration of the whole of Jewish mystical literature, by which he eventually set it in historical order, overturning in the process the ideas both of Orthodox Jews and of the progressive scholars of Judaism loosely grouped in the academic movement known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the "science of Judaism").

Shortly after getting his doctorate, Scholem moved permanently to Palestine, against the wishes of his parents. Chance threw in his way the post of librarian of the newly founded Hebrew University. Four years later, in 1927, a vacancy occurred for a lecturer in Jewish mysticism, and when the university authorities applied to Germany for a recommendation, they were told that the best man for the job was under their noses—their librarian, Gershom Scholem. Thus Scholem entered upon his academic career. His father, who had wanted him to be a professor in a German university, could hardly have imagined the renown that his son would achieve as professor of Jewish mysticism and kabbalah at the Hebrew University. Having scorned the ladder of German academic success, and disbelieving entirely in the concept of "German-Jewish symbiosis" which had meant so much to the philosopher Hermann Cohen and others, Scholem was amply justified in his choice by the subsequent course of events.

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Indeed, there is a link between Scholem's revolt against the concept of "German-Jewish symbiosis" and his decision to embark on the study of Jewish mysticism. For this was a field of study which was as remote as possible from German academic ideas of the respectable. When he turned to this wild, strange subject, Scholem was making a claim to Jewish, as opposed to German, culture. In this respect, he was not alone; he was following the path of Martin Buber, who had asserted the contemporary relevance of one product of the mystical tradition, Hasidism, in the face of German-Jewish disdain for this uncouth movement of East European Jewry. He was also following the path of Micha Joseph Bin-Gorion (Berdyczewski), who founded the study of Jewish folklore. And in a way Scholem was tracing the same arc of development as the religious philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, who on the point of conversion to Christianity was recalled to Judaism not by the decorous German-Jewish Orthodoxy of Samson Raphael Hirsch but by attending a fervent Yom Kippur service in a prayer room of East European Jews, where, for the first time, he understood what Judaism was about.

Yet none of these men, Scholem included, quite severed himself from his German background. Even in their rebellion against German culture, they were influenced by German models. Buber, Bin-Gorion, and even Rosenzweig were doing for Judaism what Hamann and Herder had done for Germany—asserting a romantic attachment to folkish roots as opposed to the ideals of rationalist universalism. As for Scholem, in joining the Zionist youth movement, he was asserting his Jewish identity in a way partly parallel to that of the German youth movements of the time. In fact, despite his anti-Germanism, Scholem never lost his unmistakably Germanic stamp. He brought to the study of the Kabbalah, that most un-Germanic subject, standards and modes of scholarship that he learned in Germany. He promoted these standards over and against Buber's subjective, romantic style of thought (which was itself integrally German). Thus the "German-Jewish symbiosis" which Scholem attacked so bitterly as a snare and as a delusion was in some ways, as his own work testifies, also a weapon and a support. But this, of course, only serves to make the tragic fate of German Jewry all the more poignant a spectacle.

II

THE study of Jewish mysticism would have offered a tremendous challenge to any ambitious scholar, but it took a Scholem to realize the true possibilities. For he sensed from the start that these materials were not just a heap of rubble, requiring a job of scholarly tidying-up. He saw that they constituted an intellectual system of great power which had played a highly important role in the history of Judaism and had indeed contributed to its continuing vitality. The system was not of the rational or philosophical type, but was the product of the mythological imagination, which Scholem regarded as an essential element in religion and in community life alike. Not that he succumbed to the temptation of regarding Jewish mysticism as the *only* "true" or authentic Judaism. Rather, he adopted a model of balance, or dialectical tension, in which mysticism formed one of the opposing poles, with rationalism forming the other. (Here Scholem differed from both Buber and Bin-Gorion, who were content to be dislocated from the central movement or balance of Judaism and to identify themselves with dissident or peripheral trends, thus developing a "counterhistory" of Judaism.)

But the first task, to which Scholem addressed himself with Germanic thoroughness, was simply to collect the scattered materials of Jewish mysticism, many of which had never been published in printed form. Scholem's early bibliographical works listed the various manuscripts and books and thus made an ordered study and assessment possible. The next task was to bring some method to the dating of these materials and thus to gain an idea of the history and development of mystical theories and notions. This required, above all, accurate philology, i.e., mastery of the language of the documents. Scholem's philological expertise, acquired through unbelievably hard work on the part of one not brought up in Hebrew or Aramaic studies, enabled him to provide convincing solutions to the main puzzles of the documents, and to dispose of the amateurish hypotheses about dating that had hitherto reigned in the field. Thus Scholem was able to work out how Jewish mysticism changed over the course of time. This had never been previously understood. Before Scholem's investigations, Jewish mysticism had been regarded as a seamless whole, both by its devotees and by its opponents—its devotees considering it too holy to be divided into historical periods, its opponents considering it undifferentiated nonsense.

The materials of Jewish mysticism, as Scholem demonstrated, belong in the main to two different periods. In the earlier period, mystical thought centered on the *Merkavah* ("Throne" or "Chariot") of God. This Merkavah mysticism was to be found in the so-called *Hekhalot* tracts, deriving from Palestine, which describe how mystics (identified as talmudic figures like Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael) journeyed through the seven heavens, surviving dangers from fearsome angels, to reach the Throne of God where they achieved a vision of the Deity. Such astral journeys, it appears, took place in a trance, induced by fasting and prayers.

The later mysticism is that which is called "Kabbalah," and it underwent its classical development in Spain in the 13th century. This kind of mysticism is much more elaborate than the earlier Merkavah mysticism. It contains a complicated system of theosophy by which the nature of God

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and His mode of creation are explained through the concept of the ten *Sefirot,* or emanations, mediating between God and the world. Rather than trance-experience, Kabbalah comprises a kind of mystical philosophy, demanding study and contemplation. The chief literary work of Kabbalah is the *Zohar,* and on it is based the subsequent history of Jewish mysticism. The *Zohar* inspired new developments, notably the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria (16th-century Palestine), the messianic movement of Sabbatianism (17th century), and the hasidic movement beginning in the 18th century. Indeed, so enormous was the impact of the *Zohar* that it was in time accepted by Jews as a divinely inspired work, equal (at least) in status to the Mishnah and Midrash, and surpassed only by the Bible, to which it gave the esoteric key.

Scholem's work on the documents of early Jewish mysticism, or Merkavah mysticism, led eventually to his dating their basic content much earlier than had previously been thought. The beginnings of Jewish mysticism were moved back from the early Middle Ages to the first centuries of the Christian era, thereby confirming the sparse indications in the Talmud of mystical activity within rabbinic circles. This did not mean, however, a reinstatement of the traditional Orthodox view that Jewish mysticism derives from primeval, even antediluvian, times. Unlike the kabbalists themselves, Scholem did not regard the biblical prophets, for example, as mystics. In his view, mysticism was a phenomenon that succeeded the dying away of biblical prophecy, and represented an attempt to bridge the resultant gap between man and God.

SCHOLEM'S work on the later Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah, and its main literary expression, the *Zohar,* resulted not in a confirmation of early origins but, on the contrary, in a demonstration of its medieval character.

Written in Aramaic, once a Jewish vernacular but in the Middle Ages far less well-known than Hebrew and therefore more impressive, the *Zohar* claims as its author a famous sage of the mishnaic period, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai. He in turn is represented as having learned his secret wisdom from previous sages stretching in an unbroken chain back to Adam; hence this mystical knowledge is given the name "Kabbalah," meaning "tradition." Scholem offered a comprehensive and convincing proof that almost in its entirety the *Zohar* was written by a 13th-century author, Moses de Leon, and as an original composition rather than a compilation of previously existing materials. The full proof is one of the most brilliant arguments in the history of literary criticism; it is lucidly summarized in the fifth lecture in Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941).

To be sure, there had always been those, ranging from the ultra-Orthodox Jacob Emden to the Enlightenment historian Heinrich Graetz, who had denounced the *Zohar* as a forgery (and Graetz had argued that the forger was Moses de Leon). Yet against this, there was the sheer heterogeneity of the *Zohar,* which is more like a whole literature than a single book, comprising not only a commentary on the Torah, but a number of separate treatises, written in apparently different styles, with titles such as "The Book of Concealment" and "The Secret of Secrets." Many scholars had come to the conclusion that the *Zohar* was partly medieval, but that it also contained a nucleus of genuinely ancient material. This plausible hypothesis was the one with which Scholem began his investigations, for it seemed inherently unlikely that one person could have produced such a massive literature on his own. Nevertheless, he finally concluded that this was indeed the case, apart from three components which he declared to be even later than the main body of the *Zohar,* being a rather weak imitation of it by another hand.

What then are *we* to think of the *Zohar,* if it is proved to be a medieval work masquerading as an ancient one? Scholem's reaction was quite different from that of the indignant Graetz. He pointed out that what is called "pseudepigraphic" literature has played a great part in the history of religions; many books of the Bible and Apocrypha belong to this category. The device of putting one's ideas into the mouth of some great figure of the past is not just a deceitful way of attracting attention, but a method of self-annihilation by which the writer opens himself to thoughts beyond his normal capabilities.

Having solved the question of the authorship and date of the *Zohar,* and having detached this question from the issue of moral blame (for forgery) with which it had been entangled, Scholem was able to look at the *Zohar* as the classical expression of Spanish-Jewish mysticism in its period. Yet far from relegating the Kabbalah to one particular historical age, as its denigrators wished to do, he showed that it was a stage in a continually developing movement of thought, one with both a past and a future.

It was, finally, Jewish mysticism in its full historical development that engaged Scholem's synthesizing intellect. He wished to ascertain the factors that unified the isolated Merkavah mystics of the early talmudic period with the *Zohar,* with the complicated theosophic scheme of Lurianic Kabbalah, with the trauma of Sabbatian messianism, and with the charismatic communal leaders of the hasidic movement of the 18th century. In doing so he aimed to show how Jewish mysticism changed from an esoteric by-path on the fringes of the Jewish community to an active communal force capable of influencing the course of Jewish history. This very large project necessitated a scholarly stance very different from the usual specialization in one historical period; it required, in fact, an investigation ranging over eighteen centuries.

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III

SCHOLEM saw in all forms of Jewish mysticism a paradox of rebellion and conservatism. On the one hand, mystics are rebels against the staidness of normative Judaism, with its orderly this-world orientation and its concept of a transcendent God; against this, the mystic tries to create bridges between the lower and the upper worlds. On the other hand, Jewish mystics have been concerned not to abandon Judaism but to revitalize it: to put new meaning into traditional prescriptions, prayers, and practices, and thus to defend them against the encroachments of skepticism. Scholem sees this double aim as setting up a tension that has both threatened the disintegration of Judaism and, at the same time, has enabled Judaism to surmount the dangers of petrification. Only by walking this tightrope has Judaism retained sufficient adventurousness to avoid fossilization. Only by risking disaster has it avoided the greater disaster of grinding to a halt.

Scholem was hardly blind to the dangers of mysticism, or unsympathetic to the arguments against it made at various times by Jewish religious authorities. Although the rabbis of the Talmud did not outlaw mysticism—on the contrary, they greatly respected it—they nevertheless limited it as an activity to a carefully circumscribed elite. And they constantly warned against its perils: the mystic, aiming to ascend to regions far above the humdrum, mundane world, could end with a contempt for ordinary everyday living that amounted to heresy. A famous cautionary story in the Talmud tells of four rabbis who entered the "garden" (*pardes*) of mystical experience; only one of them, Rabbi Akiva, emerged unharmed.

Mysticism in the talmudic period was involved, in a way not yet fully understood, with the doctrine known as Gnosticism, and adherence to this doctrine, the rabbis understood, could lead to complete alienation from Judaism. For there was a tendency to explain the split between the mundane and the spiritual by postulating a split in the universe itself; at its most extreme, this led to a doctrine of Two Powers, the lower of which was the creator of this unsatisfactory earth, while the higher power could be approached only by purging oneself of the dross of the corporeal.

This dualism was Gnosticism proper. Jewish mystics, believing in One God who created the earth, did their utmost to avoid it. Yet their very undertaking made Gnosticism an ever-present danger. Scholem, indeed, was inclined to see the origin of Gnosticism itself in an internal revolt against the "anti-mythological stance" of the Jewish religion, an attempt to put back into the concept of God the color, movement, and narrative interest that had been drained from it by the shift from polytheism to monotheism.

It is certainly true that the Bible has nothing to say about the biography of God or the geography of His dwelling place, while Merkavah literature, with its elaborate angelology and its descriptions of the seven heavens leading to the Throne room of God, does something to supply the need for mythological content. In the subsequent development of Jewish mysticism, the mythologizing urge was given ever more imaginative play, and, as an inevitable consequence, the tendency to dualism increased. In the Kabbalah, God's biography and geography receive fantastic elaboration. God is even provided with a wife, and, eventually, with a cosmic love story, spanning the centuries of past and future, with tragic episodes and a happy ending. The early mystics had voyaged through space to reach the Throne of God; the later mystics voyage through God Himself (they call this the "upper Merkavah"). Geography and biography merge: the seven heavens become transformed into seven regions of God Himself, with further regions to explore beyond.

A STRONG impetus to the Kabbalah, Scholem argued, was given by the coldness of the categories of Jewish medieval philosophy, in which the anthropomorphisms of the Bible and Talmud were allegorized and rationalized into philosophical abstractions taken from the Aristotelian system. Maimonides' doctrine of the attributes of God can still be discerned under the kabbalistic system of the *Sefirot*, but changed and personalized as if in a dream. The attributes awaken to life and form themselves into strange patterns and relations, some of them sexual. They combine into organic forms—sometimes that of a man, sometimes that of a tree. Instead of philosophizing the anthropomorphisms of Bible, Talmud, and Midrash into abstract categories, the Kabbalah makes them even more concrete, but on a cosmic scale. If the Bible speaks of the "hand" of God, this to the kabbalists is not just a metaphor for His influence on events, but a real hand, so real that all human hands are unreal in comparison, since they achieve what reality they have only by partaking of the reality of God's hand. The Kabbalah thus rebels against the gulf between the spiritual and the material—a gulf created by the very effort of philosophy to generalize and conceptualize.

Rationalism separates, while mysticism denies separation and seeks to demonstrate that the universe forms a continuum. Thus the Kabbalah opposes not only the rationalism of philosophy, but also that of the Talmud, which separates man from God by regarding the commandments of the Torah as applying to the human situation only, and not as a means of affecting the inner essence of God. The commandments in their talmudic elaboration tend to assume the aspect of a mere set of rules, many of them arbitrary, for the patterning of individual and communal behavior. The mystic rebels against this limited role, and reasserts the link between the visible and invisible

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worlds: the commandments become prescriptions for affecting the life of God and for promoting reconciliations among the various parts of the cosmos. The Kabbalah asserts always that what we experience on earth is what God experiences on high. Our suffering is an adumbration of the cosmic suffering of God. The whole cosmos is yearning to achieve healing and wholeness, and the commandments performed on earth by men have a vital role in bringing about this longed-for denouement.

Yet if all this gives a new urgency and importance to the performance of the commandments, it also sets the stage for their abolition, when they have completed their cosmic task. The very idealization by which the Kabbalah elevates the commandments to mystical or magical status sows the seeds of antinomianism, or the abrogation of Law.

It is in just this way that the Kabbalah had an extraordinary and revolutionary impact on Jewish ideas of the messianic age. The early mysticism of talmudic times, the Merkavah mysticism, had no messianic significance at all, because it was confined to a very small circle of initiates who were interested in obtaining a personal vision of God on His Throne. When, however, after many centuries, Jewish mysticism surfaced again, first in Germany and then in Spain from the 11th century onward, it had acquired characteristics which were eventually bound to produce an overt messianism of fateful import for future Jewish history.

IV

SPANISH Kabbalah contained a theory of history: an account of how the world had been created, what had gone wrong with it, and how it might be put right. In effect, it was a huge magical system by which the initiate might expect to produce effects on a cosmic scale, including the overcoming of the evil powers retarding the coming of the messiah. This new system placed enormous potential power in the hands of the mystic. The magical use of the commandments and prayers at the hands of some great soul (confident or deluded enough to believe that he knew exactly how to turn the key) might cause reconciliations and recombinations in the worlds above that would result in a *tikkun*, or "mending," and this beneficent readjustment of the cosmos would have, as its inevitable corollary on earth, the coming of the messianic age. The mystic did not have to wait patiently for the coming of the messiah, as the rabbis had enjoined; he could do something to make it happen.

These practical potentialities would only be realized on the political stage, however, when the Kabbalah had developed sufficient prestige to foster a mass movement. In the Spanish Kabbalah, this was far from being the case, and mystics were still small in numbers and uninfluential. But the expulsion from Spain in 1492 gave a tremendous shock to the whole Jewish people, and it was in the wake of that shattering event that a new great surge in kabbalistic thought and activity took place, this time in Palestine in the 16th century in the town of Safed. It centered on the extraordinary personality of Isaac Luria, known as the Ari. Here the kabbalistic belief in the correspondence of the human and the divine led to the daring doctrine that the disaster of exile and expulsion was not just part of Jewish history but part of the biography of God. In order to create the world, God had had to exile part of Himself from Himself; and this creative withdrawal (*tzimtzum*) or exile was what was being reenacted on earth by Israel. This gave a positive function to the exile that both comforted and stimulated hope; and new attention was given to the stages of *tikkun*. The personality of Luria, together with the charisma of his gifted circle of followers, leading a holy life in Palestine, captured the interest and devotion of almost the whole Jewish world.

Kabbalistic ideas, for the first time, now became the norm in Jewish rabbinical teaching everywhere, and prayer books were altered to conform with Lurianic notions of the mystical efficacy of prayer and the role of the commandments in uniting the split in the upper worlds and reconciling God with His exiled consort, the *Shekhinah*. Mysticism, from being a solitary activity reserved for the very few in talmudic times, regarded as too dangerous for general knowledge, had become part of the education of every learned Jew.

At the same time, dualistic tendencies already apparent in the *Zohar* received new emphasis in the Lurianic Kabbalah (which was put into writing by Luria's disciples, Luria himself being mostly, like Socrates, a fount of oral, not written, wisdom). The evil against which the mystic pitted himself was not psychological, as in talmudic Judaism, but cosmic, forming (though this was unspoken) a part of the constitution of God Himself. The whole of cosmic history became the story of God purging Himself of evil.

A fascination with the demonic, absent from the classical Judaism of the Bible and Talmud, thus became increasingly a feature of kabbalistic thinking and practice. Judaism now developed a doctrine of Original Sin which stemmed from a period even earlier than the sin of Adam—from the time of the cosmic disaster known as "the breaking of the vessels," a concept invented by Luria.

Our knowledge of this historical development of Jewish mysticism is due, in major part, to the work of Scholem. This work, as I have mentioned, offended many people—the Orthodox because of his late dating of the *Zohar*, and the heirs of the Enlightenment because of his demonstration of the importance of the role of mysticism in Judaism. Scholem's next step, however, was even more unpalatable. He resuscitated the unsavory incident of

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the pseudo-messiah Sabbatai Sevi, which most people thought best forgotten, and showed that it was of central importance in Jewish history, arising logically and inevitably out of the Kabbalah.

V

SABBATAI SEVI (1626-76) was a strange and tortured personality who came from a milieu saturated with the concepts of the Lurianic Kabbalah. He alternated between moods of deep depression and moods of manic exaltation, when he thought himself the messiah and exuded a self-confidence that carried all before it. In his moods of exaltation he would commit in public "strange acts" involving the breach of important Jewish laws (for example, he would eat forbidden fat). To these acts, shocking to his audience, he attached a mystical significance; but in his ordinary moods he adhered strictly to all rabbinical and biblical laws.

On his own, Sabbatai Sevi would not have gained widespread adherence. He was dismissed by most people as unbalanced, and he himself believed in his messianic mission only by fits and starts—and even when he believed in it, he was more concerned to provide impressive charismatic exhibitions than to build a movement or engage in the necessities of propaganda. It was only when Nathan of Gaza, a man of great gifts and industry who was widely respected as a scholar and kabbalist, became converted to a belief in Sabbatai that a messianic movement of historical importance became possible. It was Nathan who provided the link with the Lurianic Kabbalah and with the whole previous history of Jewish mysticism, and who brought all the energy of this centuries-old aspect of Jewish religious experience to the exploitation of the compelling contradictions of Sabbatai's character. At the same time, Nathan, accepted as the prophet who by tradition would accompany the messiah, was able to mobilize non-kabbalistic messianic expectations as well. By the time the movement acquired mass support, it had become a mixture of talmudic, folkloristic, and kabbalistic elements capable of appealing to a wide spectrum of the Jewish people.

Gershom Scholem's great work, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Hebrew, 1957; English translation, 1973) is the apex of his achievement, combining as it does detailed, patient scholarship with his characteristic originality, cutting through the confusions of all previous writers on the subject and leading to new formulations of wide significance for the history of religion. The work is, however, disconcerting in many ways. The Sabbatian movement ended in utter bathos. The messiah-figure who had aroused such hopes throughout the Jewish world, when given the choice of death or conversion to Islam, accepted conversion. This ignoble collapse, for the vast majority of Jews, meant the end of the movement, and it then became of great concern to conceal the extent to which Sabbatai had received both official and mass support. Part of Scholem's work consisted in exposing the extent of this cover-up, and here he aroused the anger of other scholars who felt he had gone too far.

Even more controversial was Scholem's assessment of the antinomian aspect of the Sabbatian movement. He showed how the Sabbatian movement had put forward doctrines usually regarded as the antithesis of Judaism, and yet these doctrines were not repudiated by the learned and pious scholars who flocked to Sabbatai's banner. For example, Sabbatai claimed divine status by signing his letters "Shaddai," one of the biblical names of God. (He also made great play of the fact that the name Sabbatai Sevi and "Shaddai" were equivalent in the system of numerology known as *gematria*.) One would have thought that, as far as pious Jews were concerned, this would have spelled an end to his claims; and indeed some Jewish leaders were horrified by this blasphemy and withdrew their support. But what is surprising is how many Jewish leaders took this claim to divinity in their stride.

One could argue that the development of the Kabbalah, especially in its Lurianic form, had prepared the way for this by according the messiah a cosmic status that he did not have in talmudic Judaism, and also by dividing the Godhead into so many layers or departments that it was possible to identify the messiah with one of these aspects without deifying him completely. Nevertheless, the fact is that the very thing that had been held to make Christianity idolatrous was now accepted without protest by a large portion of the Jewish people and their leaders. On the basis of this, Gershom Scholem came to the startling conclusion that there is *no* fixed definition of Judaism; Judaism is simply everything that it has been historically, and must therefore include a doctrine of the deification of the messiah, at least as one of its possible manifestations.

The Sabbatian movement proved similar to Christianity in another important respect: its abrogation of the Torah and declaration of the advent of a new law. This aspect was not fully developed in the lifetime of Sabbatai Sevi himself; yet he did introduce many innovations of a liturgical character, incorporated new festivals, and by his own performance of "strange acts" signalized that there could be mystical power in the breaking of the law as well as in its observance. This clear tendency to antinomianism was, however, again accepted by the majority as within their understanding of the character and function of a messiah.

After the apostasy and death of Sabbatai Sevi, these antinomian tendencies were intensified by those who remained faithful to his memory. The whole Torah was regarded as abrogated, or at most as in force only until the expected return of the messiah. Many Sabbatians regarded Sabbatai's

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apostasy as itself an act of mystical significance, the last of his "strange acts," and decided to follow his example. They formed the Donmeh sect, continuing to believe in Sabbatai secretly while outwardly behaving as Muslims—a weird regression to the condition of the Marranos under Christianity. Finally, the Sabbatian sect known as the Frankists turned antinomianism into a regime of sexual license and deliberate ceremonial breaches of Jewish law. Their "sanctification" of sin, together with their gnostic theology, made them the the spiritual heirs of such gnostic libertine sects of the ancient world as the Carpocratians.

SCHOLEM wrote with a certain sympathy even about the wildest excesses of Sabbatian antinomianism, with its doctrine of salvation through sin. For he saw this development as a logical and understandable outcome of the anarchic forces within the Kabbalah—forces which were invoked for the defense of Judaism against rationalism but which contained their own destructiveness. Moreover, he characteristically considered Sabbatianism a creative as well as a destructive force. By breaking the mold of the Law, it released new energies and new religious and political possibilities. Scholem pointed out the part taken by Sabbatians, or ex-Sabbatians, in the French Revolution; and also what he claimed was a strong Sabbatian influence in the growth of the Reform movement in Judaism—a movement usually regarded as rationalist in the extreme, far removed from mystical fantasies. According to Scholem, the genesis of new ways of thought is more catastrophic and agonized than later beneficiaries suppose; the Enlightenment itself owed more to kabbalistic and neoplatonic occultism than to sober common sense. When one looks at the maelstrom of ideas underlying the discoveries of Kepler and Newton, one is forced to agree.

Indeed, the rise of modern science, as Alexander Altmann and others have pointed out, owes much to the Kabbalah. Normative Judaism, preoccupied with morality and the duties of family and community life, kept its gaze on this world and dismissed cosmological speculation with the talmudic injunction against asking "what is above, what is beneath, what was before, and what will be hereafter." The Kabbalah, turning its gaze from earth to heaven, produced a daring cosmological scheme of soaring range, precursor of the vast schemes of modern astronomy and atomic physics. Even more important, the Kabbalah was concerned with hidden *forces* in the universe, and with the possibility of harnessing and manipulating them; this has been the key concept of modern science and the secret of its power. So it was paradoxically the irrationalism of mysticism, rather than the rationalism of Talmudism, that turned out to have more in common with the ultra-rationalism of science.

Scholem's work on the paradoxically creative power of antinomianism aroused opposition from many quarters. He was accused of glorifying antinomianism, and also of exaggerating its part in the fundamental thought of the Kabbalah. Here there was considerable misunderstanding. Scholem called himself a "religious anarchist," but he did not mean by this that he sided with the antinomians. He meant that he did not believe that there was a norm or orthodoxy in Judaism in comparison with which all other trends were to be condemned as heresies or as inauthentic. Any trend that made use of Jewish concepts and that did not seek to turn people away from Judaism (as, for example, Christianity did) was part of the whirlpool that formed the historical reality of Judaism, showing its vitality by the ceaseless opposition, conflict, and ebb and flow of ideas. The later forms of Sabbatianism, by their utter rejection of Orthodoxy, made the same error of one-sidedness as did the rigid Orthodox who sought to repudiate the vivifying concepts of Jewish mysticism. The health of Judaism lay in the interplay of opposites, and thus in the acceptance of the whole of Jewish tradition, not just part of it.

VI

THE later history of the Kabbalah was seen by Scholem as an attempt to recover from the destructiveness unleashed by Sabbatianism. The hasidic movement of the 18th century retained the Lurianic and Sabbatian concept of a kabbalism-for-the-masses rather than for a circle of mystical initiates, but the dangerous, antinomian genies released by this concept were put back into the bottle. The Law was reasserted, and new effort was put into the "joy of the commandment." To this end, Scholem argued, it was essential to play down, or "neutralize," the messianic aspect of Kabbalism. In Hasidism, the messianic fervor and sense of renewal that Sabbatianism had created were internalized, and divorced from overt political action. The *tzaddik*, or communal leader, became a kind of interim messiah, presiding over his Hasidim in a timeless little enclave in which it was "always Sabbath." The feeling of near-worship of Sabbatai Sevi was transferred to the *tzaddik* in his particular circle, but without the universal reference that could lead to actual deification. Hasidism, therefore, was a kind of watered-down Sabbatianism, owing its tone to the previous, now-discredited movement.

This was a characterization that gave great offense to present-day Hasidim, who hotly denied any historical or theoretical link with Sabbatianism. And Scholem also "offended" against the conception of Hasidism made popular by Martin Buber as a mysticism that glorified everyday life. Scholem sharply criticized this as an idealization which ignored the gnostic influence filtered through the Lurianic and Sabbatian movements. Hasidism, he wrote, did not actually glorify everyday life but

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considered it to be sunk in the power of evil (the "husks" or *kelipot*, left over from the "breaking of the vessels"); it was the duty of the Hasid to redeem all everyday things from these demonic influences. In Scholem's view, Buber lacked a historical sense and was unaware of the continuous tradition of Jewish mysticism, which he preferred to regard as a series of unconnected outbreaks of invaluable mystical insight.

Scholem's conflict with Buber* was not merely a matter of the scholar correcting the romantic. Scholem too was a romantic, although of a different kind—a kind for whom accurate historical scholarship provided the necessary fuel. This leads to the interesting question of Scholem's own beliefs. Should we think of him merely as the historian of Jewish mysticism, recording its vicissitudes with academic detachment, or was he himself more deeply involved? There is certainly no question of Kabbalism in the traditional sense, which could only rest on a fundamentalist belief in the *Zohar* as an ancient work. Scholem never disguised his judgment that the Kabbalah represents a way of thinking that is now thoroughly outdated. Nevertheless, he held that it should be studied not merely as a dead historical phenomenon but as an ingredient in our own intellectual and spiritual lives.

That ingredient is not so much philosophical as mythical. Whereas normative Judaism struggles to be anti-mythological, setting a space between God and man, the Kabbalah (and its antecedent, Merkavah mysticism) seeks a place for myth. In the consequent conflict between myth and anti-myth lies the vitality of Judaism. Scholem did not regard myth (or mysticism) as a single universal phenomenon, as Aldous Huxley did in speaking of the "Perennial Philosophy." Each manifestation of myth is specific to a particular culture and is saturated with the historical experience of that culture. Jewish myth and mysticism, despite many details borrowed from outside, form a specifically Jewish phenomenon.

Scholem owed a considerable intellectual debt here to the ideas of Jung, which he encountered in the circle of Erich Neumann, the founder of the journal *Eranos*—though, characteristically, Scholem was never a full member of this circle, but participated in its gatherings only as an interested onlooker.† Jung believed that the individual psyche contained two poles, rationality and myth, which always sought equilibrium: an excess of rationality would lead inevitably to a compensating swing to mythical thinking. This is the pattern that Scholem applied to the collective Jewish psyche.

Scholem, however, did not invoke particular psychoanalytic concepts, such as Jung's archetypes, or Freud's Oedipus complex, to explain Jewish mysticism; he considered such an approach reductivist. The phenomena of Jewish mysticism are for the most part communal rather than individual; to interpret them as the outcome of psychological conflicts on the individual level would be like trying to explain art in terms of atomic physics. Like the sociologist Emile Durkheim, Scholem regarded the world of communal life as more than just the aggregate of the individual lives of which it is made up.

And here, on the issue of the individual versus the community, we touch on the relationship between Scholem the scholar and Scholem the Zionist. It is in this relationship, I believe, that the real bond between Scholem and Jewish mysticism is to be found. For there was something mystical in Scholem's philosophy of Zionism.

Scholem thought of the Jewish historical entity as forming an organism with its own life and principles of development. His quarrel with the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was that it treated Judaism as a corpse to be dissected. The selectivity of *Wissenschaft* scholars in choosing for study only those aspects of Judaism which could bear scrutiny by the respectable German bourgeoisie was, in Scholem's eyes, motivated by the desire not so much to "bring Judaism up to date" as to abide by the pious maxim, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Moritz Steinschneider, one of the major luminaries of the *Wissenschaft* school, actually said openly that his task was to give the remains of Judaism a decent burial. Scholem reacted against this notion with all the force of his being.

Not only did his scholarship differ from that of the *Wissenschaft*, but his Zionism too differed from the Zionism of those who repudiated the history of the Diaspora and thought of themselves as making an entirely new start. He regarded Zionism as something both new and very old: as a new expression of the ancient energies of the Jewish national organism, and as further proof of the ability of that organism to perpetuate itself by fresh responses to the challenges of history. Zionism itself, moreover, was an assertion, made by the Jewish national organism, of the same kind that had been made unequivocally by the Kabbalah when it claimed an eternal, even divine, status for the Jewish nation (by identifying it with the *Sefirah* called *Malkhut* and with the *Shekhinah*). Further, Scholem saw the Kabbalah as the historical precursor of Zionism—in a way that could not be predicated of normative, non-mystical Judaism. For the Kabbalah had not waited passively for the exile to end in God's good time, but had grappled agonizingly with the fact of exile, had

* See Scholem's article, "Martin Buber's Hasidism," COMMENTARY, October 1961, followed by Buber's article answering Scholem, "Interpreting Hasidism," September 1963 and Scholem's reply, Letters from Readers, February 1964.

† See David Biale's book, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (1979), and my review of it in COMMENTARY, November 1979.

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given it metaphysical status, and had prepared a technique and a timetable for ending it and breaking through to a new mode of national being. This, in the Sabbatian movement, had led to disaster, but the breaking of the orthodox mold thus achieved had prepared the way for political Zionism.

For Scholem, as we have seen, this was the pattern of progress: creativeness was attained only through destruction and disaster, in which, however, the traditional was not repudiated but transformed. It is thus not surprising (at least in retrospect) that the young Scholem, inspired with Zionist feeling, should have reached out for a form of Judaism which he instinctively knew to have in it the seeds of destruction and creation, the movement of life and new birth, despite its outward appearance of uncouthness and even weirdness. It was by no means the choice of an academic, looking for a "subject" in which he could make his mark, but rather a spiritual choice and commitment.

Scholem had a vision of the wholeness of Jewish experience, and it was this vision, especially as it affected his deep attachment to Zionism, which acted as the motivation of his stupendous effort of scholarship. But it is necessary to distinguish sharply between this vision of wholeness and the relativism which has often been advocated in other branches of modern Jewish scholarship. Scholem attacked the idea of a "normative" Judaism in the sense of a dominant strain or direction of thought against which all other tendencies were deemed insignificant. But he did not seek to negate all unity or discernible pattern in Jewish history, or to divide off succeeding ages or generations in such a way as to deny their continuity one with the next. Least of all did he try to explain succeeding movements solely in terms of the social, economic, or sociological substrata prevailing at the time. His main aim was to display the *dialectical* character of Jewish culture: the presence within it of a perennial conflict between the forces of conservation and the forces of change, or between reason and instinct, or between orthodox theology and mythology (all ways of putting the same thing). In place of a single tradition, he postulated *two* traditions, each with its history and continuity—a tradition of orthodoxy and a tradition of dissent, or, in Freudian terms, a tradition of the ego and a tradition of the id. These were in continual conflict, but the conflict itself was another tradition.

VII

It is only at this point that one may suggest certain limitations in Scholem's approach. For him, talmudic Judaism is the domain of the ego, while mysticism is the domain of the id. But is this quite correct? Talmudic Judaism, after all, has its own dialectic, of halakhah (law) and aggadah (lore). How does this opposition relate to the dialectic of Talmudism and Kabbalism?

The aggadah is the mythology of the Talmud, the embodiment of its abstract ideas in stories, picturesque, impossible, and wild. Only part of this aggadah, however—indeed, a very small part—is mystical in character. Whereas the Kabbalah, as it developed in the Middle Ages, regarded itself as the heir of the aggadah and made it even more wild by giving it an entirely mystical meaning, the aggadah of the Talmud is developed in the service of non-mystical ideas. The Talmud's is a kind of humanistic mythology that gives a background of dream and instinctual passion to ideas that are essentially rational: an example is the extraordinary story of the journey through time made by Moses to attend a lecture given by Rabbi Akiva, which he is unable to understand. (This little myth validates the concept of change and progress in the Oral Law.) But besides little humanistic myths, there are the big myths too, which are based on the Bible: the myth of the expulsion from Eden and of the Exodus from Egypt.

Such myths give subliminal support to the values that are articulated more explicitly in the halakhic portions of talmudic Judaism, and these, I would argue, are the values of adulthood. Mystical myths, by contrast, are a flight to infancy, or even as far back as the womb, since they are all concerned to break down the separations set up by individuality and personal relations. Such a flight is not ruled out by the Talmud. Indeed, it is conceded as one of the possibilities of the psyche, albeit one that can lead to knowledge of so basic a kind that it threatens the whole psychic structure, and must therefore be kept within strict bounds. But the Talmud's own characteristic "mysticism" is of the type which Buber incorrectly attributed to the Hasidim: the "normal mysticism" (this term is actually a coinage of Max Kadushin) which achieves closeness to God not by prying into His internal constitution or seeking incorporation into His mysteries, but by going about His business in the affairs of everyday life.

The question, then, is whether the Kabbalah should be regarded not as the unconscious mind of Judaism, but rather as its psychosis. To ask this question is not to return to a pre-Scholem attitude of amnesia and repression, by which the whole tradition is dismissed as if it had never existed. The Kabbalah's space-flight through the geography of God is a descent into the abyss of the human mind and a daring exploration of the origins of creativeness. Nevertheless, to elevate the Kabbalah into a constitutive pole of the dialectic of Judaism may be to accord it too high a status. In order to endow it with this status, Scholem had to exaggerate the indigenousness of the Kabbalah and to play down (though he did not entirely ignore) the derivation of many of its elements from outside sources, such as Neoplatonism, Albigensianism, and indeed Christianity in general. The origins of Christianity itself, Scholem hints (though he

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never fully argues), can be understood in the light of the career of Sabbatai Sevi. The parallel between Sabbatai Sevi and Jesus, however, is very imperfect (the parallel between Nathan of Gaza and Paul is much stronger). The similarities can best be explained not by postulating a parallel evolution out of the dialectic of Judaism but rather by the direct influence of Christianity on Judaism.

Scholem's distaste for the idea of a "normative Judaism" and his reaction against German selectivity can lead to an unwillingness to acknowledge outside influence, and therefore to a reluctance to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic. Even Scholem had to admit to reservations concerning the superstitiousness and demon-haunted dualism of Polish Hasidism; here he was almost forced to the point of admitting that some forms of Jewish existence could be inauthentic. But to admit this even in one case is to concede a point of principle: that there is an essence of Judaism in the light of which various Jewish manifestations (for example, Sabbatai Sevi's assumption of divine status) can be judged, and if necessary, condemned. Such an essence is not "normative" in the institutional sense; we may be led by it to condemn aspects of orthodox as well as unorthodox Judaism. But acknowledging it does allow us to retain the possibility of characterizing Judaism as a doctrine or attitude toward life in general, and hence to recognize the universalist implications that reside within the organic national entity that is Judaism. For if there is one thing that has always been characteristic of Judaism, it has been the refusal to identify God entirely with the Jewish people, or to sink into any kind of nationalist idolatry.

Scholem's Nietzschian view of creativity-through-destructiveness certainly has biblical support, in the apocalyptic picture of the "day of the Lord" when great catastrophes will be the prelude to a new dimension of life. Scholem pointed out that this apocalyptic view of the messianic age has alternated in Judaism with a more gradualist view, typified by the rationalist Maimonides, that the messianic age will be continuous with life as we know it and will not necessarily involve cosmic catastrophe. The controversy is strangely similar to that between revolutionary Marxists and gradualist socialists. The apocalyptic view is associated with a deep consciousness of crisis, while the rationalist view is associated with optimism about the possibility of human control of the processes of history.

Scholem may not be correct in identifying the gradualist view with strict adherence to the status quo, or in crediting catastrophism with the creative role. It is by no means clear that the talmudic vision of ordered, peaceful progress is less potent for change than the crisis theology of the Kabbalah—even though, in times of *actual* crisis, the Kabbalah does seem more relevant. We may well take a view typical of talmudic exegesis—that the catastrophic picture of the messianic age is what will happen if humanity deserves no better, while the rationalist picture is what could happen in the admittedly unlikely event that humanity achieves control of its destiny.

For after all, the catastrophic view of the Last Days, associated as it is with the idea of a radical change in the human soul, is in effect a cry of despair over human nature as it is, a prediction, or hope, that God will eventually admit the failure of His human experiment and substitute something more viable. This is a view into which Judaism has often lapsed. But its more durable, and characteristic, view, as projected in the basic myth of the Exodus, is not so deeply pessimistic. Scholem himself, in his political standpoints within the Zionist movement, always stood for control, reason, and optimism, and not for the vertigo of fanatical, magical messianism. Though he did not assign to rationalism the chief creative role in Jewish history, his intellectual practice was that of a rationalist Jew.

THESE reservations, however, cannot affect Scholem's magnificent achievement of historical reconstruction. After his work, we can no longer think of the history of Judaism as one of outer tribulations but inner calm. The Jewish psyche has been swept by storms of conflict and passion that have brought it almost to the breaking point, while at the same time acquainting it with the heights of human experience. The healing processes of sanity have intervened not only to redirect but also to conceal. Scholem has told the truth fearlessly, and has thus helped us toward a kind of sanity that incorporates within itself the insights made possible only through an understanding of madness.

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Thatcherization (Cont'd.)

John O'Sullivan

FROM the moment that Britain's election date of June 9 was announced, Margaret Thatcher was the firm favorite of both opinion polls and bookmakers. Still, it was at least theoretically possible to imagine a sequence of events in the ensuing campaign that might produce a "hung Parliament," in which no single party would enjoy a majority. The political journalists who made such a prediction pointed to three factors.

First, there was the volatility of the British electorate. As recently as mid-1981 the alliance of Liberals with the newly-founded Social Democratic party (SDP) had scored 52 percent in opinion polls. Less than two years later, it was down to 14 percent. The Tories, on the other hand, having hovered around 30 percent before the Falklands war, had now climbed up to 46 percent—a 16-percent lead over Labor in second place. Might not such dramatic reverses themselves be reversed in the course of a lively campaign?

Second, 1982 and 1983 saw a revival of nuclear unilateralism. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), after years of relative torpor, grew in numbers and activity; a group of "peace women," camped outside the U.S. air base at Greenham Common, attracted enormous media attention and apparent public support; and opinion polls showed large majorities against the installation of Cruise missiles in Britain. The nuclear protesters were largely middle-class. So it seemed at least possible that some Tory voters might be attracted to a Labor party led by Michael Foot, an old CND marcher, and by the unilateralist defense policy set forth in the Labor manifesto.

Finally, it was thought that the 13-percent rate of unemployment must inevitably dent the Tory lead as the campaign progressed. Inflation (a naturally Tory issue) had been replaced in opinion polls by unemployment (a naturally Labor issue) as the most important problem facing the country. Labor, moreover, was judged to have better policies for dealing with it. And it had been the conventional political wisdom for thirty years that a party which tolerated high unemployment could not win an election. Many seasoned observers felt in their bones that, whatever the polls said, water simply could not run uphill.

All three expectations were proved false by the course of the campaign. Volatility simply failed to occur—at least with regard to the Tories. At the start of the campaign their share of popular support was estimated by various polls at between 43 percent and 47 percent—and it remained between those approximate figures throughout. The Tory share of the actual vote, when it came, was 43.4 percent.*

This extraordinary stability was reflected in a smoothly efficient Tory campaign which encountered only minor embarrassments. The most serious was the revelation that the Conservative candidate for Stockton South, Tom Finnegan, had once been a member of the fascist National Front and had indeed fought two elections in its interest in 1974. He was hastily summoned to the Conservative Central Office where he claimed that he had left the Front in 1975 and that, when applying for a Tory candidature in another part of the country, had concealed his previous political activities because he was ashamed of them. In response, the Tory hierarchy adopted a Janus-like posture of publicly supporting the right of repentant sinners to reenter democratic politics while privately indicating displeasure and studiously not rendering Finnegan much assistance in his winnable constituency. Then the matter took a farcical turn. The Board of Deputies of British Jews published a photograph that apparently showed Finnegan leading a fascist march in 1977, fully two years after he claimed to have resigned from the Front. Not so, replied the candidate, that was my brother. But since this second fascist Finnegan did not happen to be a Tory candidate, the affair gradually petered out. And the voters of Stockton South subsequently saved Mrs. Thatcher from any further embarrassment.

A second minor brouhaha occurred when Kenny Everett, a disc-jockey and anarchic comedian, appeared with other show-biz figures at a Conserva-

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* This figure is only for Great Britain; if the results from Northern Ireland, where the major British parties do not contest elections, are included, then the Tory share falls slightly, to 42.4 percent.

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tive "youth rally" and shouted "Let's Bomb Russia" and—for Everett is no slave to taste—"Let's kick Michael Foot's stick away" (a reference to the Labor leader's ubiquitous walking stick). This went down well with the assembled young Conservatives, but it outraged the forces of chapel solemnity which are never far below the surface of Liberal opinion. The Liberal leader, David Steel, sternly demanded that Mrs. Thatcher disavow the offending jokes and speculated darkly on the primitive unpleasantness of Thatcherite conservatism. For her part, the Prime Minister refused to rebuke Everett on the grounds that a comedian's jokes did not require any official comment from her.

This episode, which occurred in the last few days of the campaign, may have deprived the Tories of some votes from Mrs. Grundy. But the revelation that fun-anarchy was compatible with Toryism, even with Mrs. Thatcher's brand of Toryism with its stress on "Victorian values," may also have *won* votes. For the first occasion in a postwar election, the Conservatives gained the largest share of first-time voters—41 percent compared to the Alliance's 30 percent and Labor's 29 percent. And some press reports had young people, whose hair styles showed the influence of the cockatoo or the shaving brush, expressing support for Mrs. Thatcher's toughness: "Better the Iron Lady than those cardboard men."

Some protest was also provoked by the sophisticated and aggressive political advertising campaign carried out on behalf of the Tories by a leading company. One poster in particular aroused criticism. It was aimed at the West Indian and Asian communities and showed a prosperous black man under the heading: "LABOR SAYS HE'S BLACK. TORIES SAY HE'S BRITISH." The poster cleverly encapsulated and linked two quite complicated ideas, the first that nationality transcends race, the second that full membership in the national community is incompatible with a career as an officially designated minority seeking special status through the political process.

This created a problem for Labor and Alliance critics who had long taken the position that West Indians and Asians were simply black and brown Englishmen. They could hardly denounce the Tories for agreeing with them. On the other hand, the British Left has been stealthily moving to support group quotas and special minority representation (which in America masquerades under the name of "affirmative action"). The Left could hardly deny the contradiction between color-blind citizenship and "positive discrimination" without arguing the case for the latter more vigorously and candidly than it was prepared to do in an election campaign.

The poster consequently aroused a storm that was loud but incoherent. Its critics objected to it violently (one minority newspaper refused to publish it), but could never quite explain the grounds of their objection. They were often reduced to complaining that, because the Tories had taken the lead in restricting immigration, it was somehow illegitimate for them to seek immigrant votes. The Tories simply stood their ground.

The government should perhaps have been more seriously embarrassed by leaks of confidential documents in which various "options" for cutting government expenditures and attracting private finance into health care were discussed. Labor spokesmen argued that these constituted a "secret manifesto" (*sic*), more radical than the published one, and indicated that the Tories intended to sweep away the welfare state, public education, etc. Perhaps the very vehemence of Labor's assault told against it, but at any rate the charge never stuck. There was little public disposition to pay attention to it, let alone to believe it.

THE one issue which did have a considerable influence on the result was the "peace" issue. It accomplished a quick change in the wings, reappeared as the "defense" issue, and materially helped the Tories. The truth is that the notion of the irresistible rise of unilateralism had always been something of an illusion. American journalists, in particular, were inclined to see the anti-nuclear campaign as merely a local variant of a wider international movement, which included the West German Greens and the U.S. freeze campaign, and to overlook its distinctive British features. Thus they tended to interpret the high level of opposition in the polls to the stationing of Cruise missiles in Britain as an indication of CND's overall popular support. This was an error. Opposition to the Cruise missiles reflected British nationalism, feeling its post-Falklands oats, and perhaps some anti-Americanism, at least as much as it reflected pacifist or neutralist sentiment. Throughout 1983, indeed, Tory MP's were pressuring the government to insist on a "dual-key" arrangement for U.S. missiles based in Britain. (This was resisted by ministers with the argument that existing *political* arrangements for cooperation sufficiently safeguarded British national interests.)

Moreover, those whose memories stretched back to the 1960's could recall that a similar wave of unilateralism then had spent itself to little effect. Admittedly, CND had swept all before it in 1960—including the annual Labor conference which adopted a unilateralist defense policy. But Hugh Gaitskell and the Labor Right managed to reverse that decision the following year. And by the 1964 election, Sir Alec Douglas-Home was able to win votes overall for the Tories by campaigning on a policy of retaining Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

It was perhaps this example which inspired the goverment to adopt an attitude of vigorous and unambiguous opposition to the peace movement. Mrs. Thatcher appointed Michael Heseltine,

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famous for his rousing orations to Tory conventions, to be Secretary of State for Defense. Heseltine and Mrs. Thatcher then proceeded to make a series of major speeches on defense in which they denounced unilateralism (or "one-sided disarmament" as it came to be called after it was discovered that few people understood the meaning of the word "unilateralism") as damaging to NATO and as an incentive to Soviet expansionism; they also attacked CND as an extreme left-wing organization whose leadership was disproportionately composed of Communists, ex-Communists, and Trotskyists. (Heseltine also went in for counter-agitprop, as when he turned up uninvited at a CND "peace vigil" and lit a candle for peace.) Such unaccustomed resistance naturally drew the charge of McCarthyism. But in the United Kingdom the charge of McCarthyism does not have quite the talismanic effect that it does in the U.S. Mrs. Thatcher and Heseltine kept up their attack and, quite soon, the debate was as much about the dubious nature of CND as about Cruise and Trident missiles.

Two factors greatly assisted the Tory campaign. If Labor had focused its attack on the government's commitment to installing the Cruise missiles, it might well have gotten widespread support, gaining both nuclear nationalists and those fearful of being involved in nuclear war for American aims. But, obligingly, Labor adopted an altogether unilateralist policy which it subsequently included in its election manifesto (described by one Labor ex-minister as "the longest suicide note in history"). This repelled all but CND's true believers. Second, the British press—in particular, the right-wing popular press—descended in force on Greeham Common. It reported that the Greenham Common women were living in squalor, often supporting themselves on welfare, held eccentric opinions on all manner of topics, included a good number of lesbians and man-haters, were subjecting their children to the lowest standards of hygiene outside Calcutta, and were breathtakingly ignorant or naive about Soviet Russia, international relations, and nuclear weapons. Of course, Greenham Common remained a symbol of peace for some; but for others it became a metaphor for the idiocy of radical life.

LABOR leaders like the unilateralist Michael Foot were therefore under a delusion in supposing that there were votes to be won on the peace issue. But at least there was party unity on the issue when the campaign began. Labor right-wingers like Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley had endorsed the unilateralist pledge in the Labor manifesto, probably on the cynical calculation that since Labor was likely to lose in any event, it might as well do so on a flagrantly left-wing program. That would leave the Left with no excuses. But the campaign itself subjected this acquiescence of the Right to intolerable strain. It makes even hardened politicians uncomfortable to be called upon daily to defend propositions that are utterly at variance with the needs of the country, the facts of the case, and their own previous policies. In addition, many ordinary Labor voters were saying that defense was their reason for crossing over to the Tories. So, in the first week, Denis Healey reinterpreted unilateralism to mean that Labor would give up the Polaris missile only "if we got adequate concessions from the Soviet Union." Attempting to preserve party unity, Foot himself redefined policy a few steps in this direction, so that Labor's aim became to "*move toward* a non-nuclear strategy." This concession was not sufficient for former Labor Prime Minister James Callaghan, who weighed in with the clearest possible repudiation of party policy: "We should not give them [i.e., Polaris weapons] up unilaterally."

As these disagreements emerged openly, Foot's attempts to pretend that the party was at one in support of unilateralism became increasingly incoherent and confused. "Are there any circumstances in which a Labor government would retain the Polaris?" he was asked by a TV interviewer. "No," he replied. Then the interviewer went on: "Are you going to get rid of the Polaris regardless of what the Russians do?" "No," replied Foot. In short, Labor's peace campaign disintegrated.

There is, indeed, strong evidence that the defense issue actually won a substantial number of votes for the Conservatives. In a survey conducted by Ivor Crewe, defense was mentioned by 38 percent of those questioned as "one of the two most important issues influencing their vote."* This compares with only 2 percent who gave the same reply in 1979. Moreover, the Tories were preferred by the astonishing margin of 54 percent among those who attached importance to defense. There was even a turnabout of opinion on Cruise missiles by election day, with 56 percent of respondents saying that allowing the missiles to be stationed in Britain was "a good idea."

A final reminder of the illusory character of the appeal of the peace movement: in Henley, Rebecca Johnson stood against Michael Heseltine as the candidate of the Women for Life on Earth party which had been formed by the Greenham Common women. She received 517 votes, or 1.1 percent of the total.

AS FOR Labor's crusade on unemployment, it is at first glance a mystery that it failed to arouse strong public support at a

* Ivor Crewe designed a major survey of 4,141 voters which was commissioned by the BBC and carried out by Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) on June 8 and 9. The overall results tally almost exactly with the results of the general election. Crewe reports some of the major findings in the June-July issue of *Public Opinion*. Except where otherwise stated, the opinion-poll and election statistics in this essay are drawn from Crewe's indispensable article.

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time when polls showed voters to be particularly concerned about the issue. The explanation seems to be that the voters did not take nearly so simple a view of the problem as did politicians and pundits. The latter assumed, for instance, that since unemployment had replaced inflation in surveys as the most important problem facing Britain, the voters would punish Mrs. Thatcher for presiding over higher unemployment rather than reward her for bringing down inflation. But this did not follow. When the voters said that inflation was not Britain's principal economic difficulty, they were quite right. At 4 percent, it clearly was not. But this did not mean that they were unconcerned about a *resurgence* of inflation, or that they would support anti-unemployment policies that risked bringing on such a resurgence. By concentrating almost entirely upon reducing unemployment, with airy talk of devaluing the pound and massively reflating, Labor seemed to adopt a cavalier attitude to inflation, which must have alarmed many voters. In any event, in the Crewe survey, the Tories led Labor by 40 percent as the party best equipped to deal with prices; this reversed a Labor lead of 13 percent on the question in 1979. And inflation, though no longer seen as the single most important problem, was still third on most people's agenda.

A second complication is that, even when voters considered unemployment a far greater evil than inflation, they did not necessarily blame it on the government. A poll of the unemployed carried out last year by the *Economist* showed that 57 percent did *not* blame the government for their plight. They blamed various factors such as the world slump, labor unions, and "nobody." And according to a Harris exit poll on election day, 24 percent of the unemployed themselves voted Conservative. This is not to say that the Tories were completely unscathed by the issue. Seventy-three percent of the few Conservative defectors gave unemployment as their reason for not voting Tory. But much less damage was suffered than anyone would have predicted beforehand.

Finally, Labor would stand to benefit from the issue of unemployment only if the voters thought that a Labor government could reduce it without serious side-effects. We have already seen that many voters feared that Labor policies would spark renewed inflation. What is more surprising is that only a comparatively small majority of voters thought that Labor could reduce unemployment at all. In 1979, Labor had enjoyed a 20-percent lead over the Tories as the party best able to deal with unemployment. By 1983, this lead had shrunk to 16 percent. In short, as Crewe sums it up: "Unemployment damaged the Conservative vote without repairing Labor's; at best it prevented Labor's disaster from turning into catastrophe."

The political disarming of unemployment did not, however, occur naturally or accidentally. Like the turnaround in the defense debate, it was the result of sustained political argument by the government, in particular by Sir Geoffrey Howe, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mrs. Thatcher. I would myself single out the influence of the two fifteen-minute periods each week of Prime Minister's Question Time, which are broadcast live on radio and sometimes repeated in excerpt on the television news programs. Since 1980 Labor MP's have used these occasions to put the blame for unemployment squarely on Mrs. Thatcher's shoulders. In reply, the Prime Minister would repeat an almost unvarying set of economic propositions: the government can do nothing to prevent workers from pricing themselves out of jobs with uneconomic wage demands; the government cannot create "real" long-term jobs; such "real" jobs only come about when firms produce goods that people want at a competitive price; and for all these reasons, a quick cure for unemployment is a quack cure. Labor MP's would jeer and the world-weary sophisticates in the press gallery would roll their eyes derisively at these slogans. But repetition forced them into the public mind so that, by the time the election was declared, unemployment had attained the status of the weather—something to deplore, but also something over which the government had no real control.

THUS it was clear at least ten days before the election that the scenario under which peace, unemployment, and electoral volatility would wreck the Tories and produce a hung Parliament was an illusion. No sensible observer expected anything other than a substantial Tory victory. At that point, however, a fresh uncertainty arose: which party would end up in second place? This speculation began with the leaders of the SDP-Liberal Alliance advertising some convenient if dubiously arrived at opinion-poll figures which showed the Alliance gaining support and Labor slipping.

The prospect quickly took on a life of its own, for several reasons. First, the Labor campaign was visibly getting nowhere. Second, both Labor's embarrassment over the defense issue and a tough Tory poster campaign, which emphasized the similarities between the Labor and Communist manifestoes, had revived earlier fears of the party's extremism. It had been, after all, only eighteen months since Tony Benn, the unofficial leader of Labor's "hard Left," had come within a hair of defeating Denis Healey for the party's deputy leadership. And, finally, Michael Foot was proving to be an electoral liability of the first order. The "old bibliophile," as he came to be called, with his mane of white hair, his stick, his dog Dizzy, and his old-fashioned ranting style of oratory, was the most unpopular leader of the opposition since opinion polls began. Only 13 percent of those questioned in one poll thought he would make a

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good Prime Minister, compared with 46 percent for Mrs. Thatcher and 35 percent for the Liberal David Steel.

This might have mattered less if Foot's unpopularity had been strictly personal—although there was, it is true, a personal element in it. But the real source of Foot's unpopularity was that he represented the modern Labor party to perfection. He believed in extensive state control, in increased public spending as the cure for inflation, in the moral equivalence of the superpowers, in nationalization, nuclear pacifism, etc., etc. If ever the voters looked as if they were forgetting what the Labor party had become in recent years, Foot would obligingly pop up on their TV screens to remind them. His eccentricities and those of the Labor party reinforced each other. Accordingly, Labor began to slip (from an already low position in the polls) and the Alliance to catch up. Volatility might not have been affecting the Tories, but it could still hurt Labor.

To stanch this hemorrhage of votes, Labor moderates like Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley began to play a more prominent role in the campaign. It was they, for instance, who alleged that the Tories intended to demolish the national health service and public education—presumably it was thought their reputation for moderation would make these lurid charges more convincing. So it is ironic that the catastrophe that overtook Labor in the final week was at least initially the fault of Denis Healey. This was his accusation, in connection with the Falklands war, that Mrs. Thatcher was "glorying in slaughter." (He amended this, when the storm broke about his ears, to "glorying in conflict.") To mention the Falklands war at all was a mistake from Labor's point of view because it reminded the voters of Mrs. Thatcher's finest hour. Although few votes were directly influenced by the war (only 1.4 percent of Crewe's respondents claimed that it had affected their vote), the Prime Minister's conduct of hostilities had dramatically confirmed a general impression that she was a political leader of unusual firmness and determination. The Tories could not themselves invoke the Falklands war to help make their case; it would expose them to the charge of exploiting the deaths of British servicemen for partisan advantage. But here was Labor's deputy leader doing the job for them. Exactly why a normally shrewd operator like Healey should blunder so crassly remains something of a mystery. The explanation is perhaps not entirely rational: he may just have lashed out wildly in the dispiriting heat of a campaign that was being lost.

Less mystery attaches to the second episode concerning the Falklands which took place a few days later while the echoes of the first were still reverberating. In response to a television heckler who had shouted (of Mrs. Thatcher) "At least she's got guts," Neil Kinnock, Labor education spokesman and now widely expected to be Labor's next leader, replied: "It is a pity that others had to spill theirs on the ground in order to prove it." When *this* storm broke, Kinnock explained away his remark as merely expressing regret at the loss of life. But this was not his first brush with the Falklands issue. A week before he had offered cautious and little noticed support to a campaign by the *New Statesman* and the Left generally for an inquiry into the sinking of the Argentinian battleship, the *General Belgrano*. Stripped of technicalities, the Left's argument was that Mrs. Thatcher had ordered the sinking of the *Belgrano* not for military reasons (such as the defense of the British naval force), but in order to prevent a Peruvian peace initiative from succeeding in bringing about a negotiated end to a war from which she was benefiting politically. Were this true, Mrs. Thatcher would be a mass murderer and war criminal. Kinnock did not, of course, go quite so far. But he asked rhetorically why the *Belgrano* had been shadowed for thirty hours by a British submarine and sunk only when it was on course for its home port. He then answered his own question:

> The most feasible answer appears to be that that the British government sought war when peace was still at least possible, a peace which would have involved complete Argentine withdrawal followed by a negotiated political settlement. The case for an immediate inquiry is paramount.

There is no evidence to support either Kinnock's suspicions or the Left's Machiavellian interpretation. What is interesting in this context is the motive underlying the Left's campaign. For the *Belgrano* obsession was shared by left-wing journalists who interrogated Mrs. Thatcher on it at several Tory press conferences. This willingness, apparently sincere, to regard sober, cautious, conventional bourgeois politicians like Mrs. Thatcher and John Nott as ruthless, amoral power maniacs—particularly in the absence of any evidence for this inverted flattery—testifies to the power of ideology to distort the mind, the imagination, and even the eyesight. An ideologue, after all, *would* have sunk the *Belgrano*, and for exactly the motives suggested. Ideologues are forever congratulating themselves on their hardheaded willingness to sacrifice people in the struggle for power. Perhaps, out of office, they attribute to others the sort of motives which inspire them—or, more precisely, attribute to others the sort of ruthlessness they display in their daydreams of power. As a leader of the "soft Left," Kinnock had to show a decent respect for its fantasies.

Whatever the motives, however, the effect on the Labor party of raising the Falklands issue was extremely damaging. Not only did it remind voters of a Tory triumph, but it also stirred up an

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undercurrent of feeling that Labor was somehow instinctively anti-national, always anxious to denigrate patriotic instincts or to point out some national failing. Most of the Alliance leaders, being themselves uncomfortable with anything like flag waving, were incapable of exploiting this opportunity. But David Owen, the former Labor Foreign Secretary and currently Social Democratic spokesman on foreign policy, did so very effectively. He lambasted both Healey and Kinnock and, appearing on a BBC television program about the *Belgrano*, criticized its producer for treating the former Argentine Foreign Minister, Costa Mendes, as a reliable and truthful witness on the issue. Such remarks were well-designed to appeal to the patriotic working-class vote which Labor was steadily alienating. As the election drew near, several polls reported that Labor and the Alliance were neck-and-neck in popular support. Volatility was at last delivering the goods.

No sooner had Mrs. Thatcher won a landslide victory than all the pundits declared she hadn't. It was pointed out, first, that the Tories had actually lost ground since 1979, achieving 1.5 percent less of the popular vote. This was a truth made false by being ripped untimely from context. The 1979 election was, in essence, a two-horse race. Voters attracted to third parties were deterred from voting for them by the calculation that they would be "wasting" their votes. But in the 1983 election, the SDP-Liberal Alliance was a serious contender, if not for power, then at least for second place. Crewe points out that 84 percent of Liberal "identifiers" voted for the Alliance in 1983, compared with only 57 percent who chose the Liberals in 1979. It is fairly obvious that if the number of parties seriously competing for votes increases, then the potential share of total votes going to any one party is likely to fall. Labor's vote fell about 10 percent between 1979 and 1983. In these circumstances, it was a remarkable achievement for the Tories to retain almost all their 1979 vote.

A second criticism is that 58 percent of those voting actually voted *against* Mrs. Thatcher and the Tories. How, therefore, can she be said to have won a great victory? But this is false. The ballot did not contain a question asking voters whether they approved or disapproved of Mrs. Thatcher. It invited people to vote *for* one of several parties. We cannot assume that all votes cast for other parties were rejections of one particular party. No doubt some were negative votes, but others were not. Indeed, it seems very likely that *some* of the voters who went to the Alliance did so because they were confident of a Tory victory and wanted to assist the Alliance against Labor. (This would account for the fact that the Tory vote was almost 3 percent lower than the forecast in otherwise accurate polls.)

Furthermore, the logic of this negative-voting theory would produce some curious results. It would mean that *all* the parties (and their policies) had been rejected by the electorate—with 72 percent rejecting the Labor party's socialism and 76 percent contemptuously dismissing the "moderate" policies of the Alliance.

Finally, we know from Crewe's survey that, at least in terms of policy, the Tories enjoy a surprisingly strong mandate. Large majorities support strict laws to regulate labor unions (72 percent); an approach to reducing unemployment that allows private companies to retain more profits as opposed to relying on the government (61 percent); the privatization of substantial parts of the British Steel Corporation and British Leyland (57 percent); and the stationing of Cruise missiles in Britain (56 percent). It is only a policy of cutting taxes even if this should require cuts in welfare services that the public opposes strongly—with only 20 percent supporting it. But this was not Conservative policy.

How does the British political landscape appear now that the smoke has cleared? The broad picture is one of substantial Conservative dominance based upon the decline of Labor and an almost even split in the Left vote. Whatever measures are used, the scale of Tory preeminence is remarkable. Geographically and occupationally, in terms of class, age, and sex, the Tories are now a genuinely inclusive national party. Thus, for the first time since 1965, there are more Tory than Labor "identifiers" in the electorate (44 to 38 percent). Forty-six percent of men and 43 percent of women voted Tory; as did 41 percent of first-time voters and 48 percent of those over sixty-five. If we look at the election geographically, the Tories have a virtual monopoly of seats in Southern England. But they are well-represented everywhere. Even in Scotland, which had been regarded as an increasingly safe Labor territory, the Tories won just short of 30 percent of the total vote—only 5 percent behind Labor.

It is in terms of social class, however, that the Tory advance is most remarkable. Recent years have seen a gradual "decomposition" of class voting in Britain. The trend continued in 1983, with fewer than half the voters (47 percent) plumping for "their" class party. In Crewe's survey, the Tory share of particular class segments ranged from 62 percent of the professional/managerial vote to 29 percent of the semi-skilled and unskilled manual-labor vote, compared to Labor's range of 12 percent to 44 percent of the same groups. (The Alliance drew almost equally from all social groups, ranging from 24 to 28 percent.) But it was among what is called the *new* working class that the Tories achieved really striking results. To quote Crewe again:

> Among private-sector workers (66 percent of all manual workers), Labor ran neck and neck with the Conservatives (36 percent Conservative, 37

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percent Labor, 27 percent Alliance). Among manual workers owning their houses (43 percent of all manual workers), the vote was: Conservative 47 percent, Labor 25 percent, Alliance 28 percent. Among manual workers living in the South (36 percent of all manual workers), the Conservatives had a similarly commanding lead (42 percent), and Labor (26 percent) came in *third*, behind the Alliance (32 percent).

By the same token, Labor's decline is dramatic. Its share of the total vote was the lowest it had achieved since 1918—lower, indeed, than any result it achieved during the previous period of three-party elections between the wars. And if we calculate the average share of the constituency vote going to Labor candidates, it was Labor's worst result since the party was founded in 1900. Geographically, Labor is virtually unrepresented south of the Trent. In Southern England, 119 Labor candidates lost their "deposits"—i.e., achieved less than 12½ percent of the total constituency vote. Thus the party has been driven back to its redoubts in Scotland, Wales, the North, and the inner-city areas.

It has been a similar retreat in class terms. Crewe points out that 38 percent of Labor's nonmanual 1979 voters switched in 1983; 36 percent of its white-collar union vote switched; and so did 33 percent of its non-union vote. Even in the broad working-class electorate, the party enjoyed a lead of only 5 percent over the Tories. In short, Labor has ceased to be a truly national party and has become a party of the regions, the minorities, a shrinking "traditional" working class, and the Celtic fringe.

The SDP-Liberal Alliance was the principal beneficiary of Labor's decline. Of every five voters who deserted Labor, three went to the Alliance, one to the Tories, and one stayed home. As we have seen, the Alliance vote was remarkably even in class terms, ranging between 24 and 28 percent of all classes. Regionally it was slightly less even. Alliance candidates came second in over 300 seats, but most of these were in Southern England where the Labor vote collapsed. In Labor seats, it was the Tories who tended to come in second. Still, Alliance candidates performed creditably in almost all areas. That is, indeed, the problem. Unlike Labor, which has a concentrated vote in certain areas that guarantees its survival in terms of parliamentary seats even when its national vote is low, the Alliance's support is spread too evenly throughout the country. Thus it makes a respectable second showing in most seats, but actually wins very few.

DRAMATIC though it is, this electoral landscape actually understates the ideological changes in British politics that are likely to result from the 1983 election. Within the Tory party itself, Mrs. Thatcher occupies a position of dominance greater than any Prime Minister since Harold Macmillan in the aftermath of his 1959 victory. The "wets" or "moderates" who were the principal opponents of Thatcherism have lost both their internal party power and—more importantly—their intellectual moorings. It was, after all, their principal argument that conservative economic policies, whatever their intellectual or long-term economic advantages, would lead inevitably to electoral disaster. Deprived of that argument, and being fundamentally not very interested in economics, they have nothing to say in opposition to Mrs. Thatcher's policies.

This intellectual revolution is reflected in the Cabinet changes. The major economic ministries are now in the hands of Thatcherite meritocrats like Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Cecil Parkinson, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who may yet prove in economic matters to be more royalist than the queen. The "wets" have either been sacked if recalcitrant, like former Foreign Secretary Francis Pym, or promoted out of harm's way if loyal, like William Whitelaw, or given jobs that will divert their energies away from the central issues of domestic politics if still dangerous, like James Prior (at Ulster) and Peter Walker (at Energy). Certainly Mrs. Thatcher is unlikely to encounter the strong and generally successful opposition to proposed cuts in public spending that she had to accept from her first Cabinet. The significance of Francis Pym's ouster—and his replacement by Sir Geoffrey Howe—is that the Foreign Office can no longer expect to carry on a foreign policy independently of the government. Mrs. Thatcher intends Thatcherism to have an international aspect.

But the broader context influencing political decisions has also changed. In the past, Tory governments were deterred from pursuing more sharply conservative policies by both the general establishment consensus in favor of social democracy (meaning, very roughly, high public spending, state economic intervention, and a gradual movement in the direction of equality), and by the prospect that Labor would win the next election. The latter meant that implementing certain policies might be entirely futile. For instance, a Tory government might reduce rent control in order to persuade investors to invest in private rented accommodation. But if the Labor party threatened to restore the full rigor of control on returning to office, no investment would be forthcoming. That is why very little privatization of nationalized industry was carried out by postwar Tory governments. Since Labor always threatened to renationalize, such measures would have destabilized the industries for no good reason.

Neither obstacle now blocks Mrs. Thatcher. The establishment consensus, unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, seems to be following the election results. And where opinions have not necessarily changed, personnel has. The skeptical Keynesians

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who occupied the higher reaches of the Treasury in 1979 have been replaced with senior officials more in line with the Prime Minister's own outlook.

More importantly, very few people can be found to predict that a Labor government will be returned any time soon. To judge from the electoral arithmetic quoted above, the most likely result of the next election is a Tory victory, and the next most likely result no clear majority for anyone —with the Tories still being the largest party. There is a presumption, indeed, that Labor will continue its decline, to be replaced eventually by a non-socialist party of the Left based upon the present SDP-Liberal Alliance.

Such a development might be forestalled if Labor were to move to the Right and reestablish contact with its former skilled-worker and white-collar supporters. But the general expectation that Neil Kinnock will win the leadership contest makes that unlikely. No doubt Kinnock, who is a shrewd politician, would himself move to the Right and adopt more moderate attitudes, as all the downy old birds predict. But his left-wing image is already well-established in the public mind and, furthermore, he is the possessor of what might be described as a left-wing personality, being voluble, aggressive, and, above all, Welsh. Kinnock as leader would therefore tend to negate any advertised moderation of Labor policy.

Instead of being faced then with a strong Labor party united in resisting any denationalization or greater reliance on the market, Mrs. Thatcher faces a weak and divided opposition, half of which is itself tempted to adopt market solutions. Both Liberal Jo Grimond and Social Democrat David Owen have argued that the Alliance should outflank the Tories by being more radical—more willing, that is, to restrain labor unions, break up monopolies, and, by such devices as vouchers, decentralize decisions to consumers, parents, and patients. As a result, the whole political spectrum has shifted to the Right, and Mrs. Thatcher is much more free to pursue right-wing policies. Indeed, this had begun to be true even before the election. The very existence of the SDP-Liberal Alliance enabled the Tory government to embark upon its ambitious program of privatizing the nationalized industries in 1981. In short, the definition of what is "politically possible" has changed in all parties. Curiously enough, the Left agrees with this analysis. In his introduction to *The Politics of Thatcherism*, a collection of essays previously published in *Marxism Today*, Stuart Hall writes half-admiringly that Mrs. Thatcher has introduced a new and "reactionary" form of common sense into the body politic.

Mrs. Thatcher has thus created an enormous opportunity for herself. Will she take advantage of it?

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Electricity

A Story

Francine Prose

ANITA sails the baby over her head. "Earth to Spaceship Bertie," she says. "Earth to Spaceship Bertie. Can you read me?"

The baby's laugh sounds forced, like Johnny Carson's when he's blown a joke. Last week she caught Bertie practicing smiles in the mirror over his crib, phony social smiles for the old ladies who goo-goo him in the street, noticeably different from his real smile. It occurs to her that the baby is embarrassed for her. Lately she's often embarrassed for herself. This feeling takes her back fifteen years to her early teens, when she and her parents and her younger sister Lynne used to go places—Jones Beach, Prospect Park—and she'd see groups of kids her own age. At the time she had felt that being with her family made her horribly conspicuous; now she realizes that it probably made her invisible.

The house is quiet. Since she's been back is the first time Anita can remember being in her parents' home without the television going. She thinks of the years her father spent trailing her and Lynne from room to room, switching lights off behind them, asking who they thought was paying the electric bills. Yet he never turned the TV off; he'd fall asleep to the *Late Show*. Now the TV is dark, the house is lit up like a birthday cake, and her father is down in the finished basement, silenced by the acoustical ceiling as he claps his hands, leaps into the air, and sings hymns in praise of God and the Baal Shem Tov.

IN the morning when Anita's father goes off to the *bet hamidrash,* the house of study, Anita and her mother and the baby watch Donahue. Today the panel is made up of parents whose children have run away and joined cults. The week Anita came home, there was a show about grown children moving back in with their parents. It reminds Anita of how in high school, and later when she used to take acid, the radio always seemed to play oddly appropriate songs. Hearing the Miracles sing "What's So Good About Goodbye?" when she was breaking up with a boyfriend had made her feel connected with lovers breaking up everywhere. But now she hates to think that her life is one of those stories which makes Donahue go all dewy-eyed with concern.

The twice-divorced mother of a Moonie is blaming everything on broken homes. "Don't you *ever* become a Moonie," Anita whispers, pressing her lips against the back of the baby's neck. Another mother is describing how her daughter calls herself Prem Ananda, wears only orange clothes, has married a boy the guru's chosen for her, and, with her doctorate in philosophy, works decorating cakes in the ashram bakery.

"Cakes?" says Anita's mother. "That's nothing. Only my Sam waits till he's fifty-seven to join a cult. After thirty-three years of marriage, he'll only make love through a hole in the sheet."

"A hole in the sheet?" Repeating this, Anita imagines Donahue repeating it, then realizes: incredibly, she and her mother have never talked about sex. Not ever. Imagining her mother or Donahue, Anita sees only close-ups, because if the camera pulled back, it would see up her mother's housedress to where the pale veined thighs dimple over the tops of her Support-hose.

Anita goes over and hugs her mother so hard that Bertie, squeezed between them, squawks like one of his bath toys. The baby starts to cry, her mother starts to cry, and Anita, not knowing what else to do, presses Bertie against her mother and pats and rubs them as if trying to burp both of them at once.

ANITA takes nothing for granted. When she lifts her foot to take a step, she no longer trusts the ground to be there when she puts it down. She used to say that you could never really tell about people; now she knows it's true. She never once doubted that Jamie loved her, that he wanted the baby. When he came to visit her and Bertie in the hospital and began crying, she was so sure it was from happiness that she literally didn't hear him say he'd fallen in love with somebody else.

She'd made him repeat it till he was almost shouting and she remembered who this Lizzie was: another lawyer in his office. At a garden party that summer, Lizzie had asked to touch Anita's belly.

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Just as Jamie was offering to move out of the house they had rented for its view, for their vision of children standing at the Victorian bay window watching boats sail up the Hudson, a nurse wheeled the baby in, in a futuristic clear plastic cart.

"Spaceship Bertie," said Jamie.

Anita's sister Lynne says that men do this all the time: Jamie's acting out his ambivalence about fatherhood, his jealousy of the mother-infant bond. This sounds to Anita like something from *Family Circle* or *Ladies' Home Journal*. Lynne has read those magazines all her life, but now that she's going for her Master's in Women's Studies, she refers to it as "keeping up." Lynne can't believe that Anita never had the tiniest suspicion. A year ago, Anita would have said the same thing, but now she knows it's possible. Whenever she thinks about last summer, she feels like a Kennedy assassination buff examining the Zapruder film. But no matter how many times she rewinds it, frame by frame, she can't see the smoking gun, the face at the warehouse window. All she sees is that suddenly, everyone in the car starts moving very strangely.

Anita's mother believes her. Overnight, *her* husband turned into a born-again Hasid. Perhaps that's why she hardly sounded surprised when on the day she and Anita's father were supposed to drive up to Nyack to see the baby, Anita called to say that she and Bertie were coming to Brooklyn. Over the phone, her mother had warned her to expect changes. Daddy wasn't himself. No, he wasn't sick. Working too hard as usual, but otherwise fine. Her tone had suggested something shameful. Had he too fallen in love with somebody else?

Pulling into her parents' driveway, Anita thought: he looks the same. He opened the door for her and waited while she unstrapped Bertie from his car seat, then sidestepped her embrace. He'd never been a comfortable hugger, but now she missed his pat-pat-pat. She held Bertie out to him; he shook his head.

"Bertie, this is your grandpa," she said. "Grandpa, this is Bertie."

"Has he been circumcised?" asked her father.

"Of course," said Anita. "Are you kidding? My doctor did it in the hospital."

"Then we'll have to have it done again," said her father. "By a *mohel*."

"Again!" yelled Anita. "Are you out of your mind?" Attracted by the noise, her mother came flying out of the house. "Sam!" She grabbed the baby from Anita. "Can't you see she's upset?"

The commotion had comforted Anita. Everything was familiar—their voices, the pressure of her mother's plump shoulder pushing her into the house, the way she said, "Coffee?" before they'd even sat down.

"I'll get it," said Anita. "You hold the baby." But her mother headed her off at the kitchen door.

"It's arranged a little different now," she explained. "Those dishes over there by the fridge are for meat. These here by the stove are for milk."

That night they couldn't eat till her father had blessed the half grapefruits, the maraschino cherries, the boiled flank steak, potatoes and carrots, the horseradish, the unopened jar of applesauce, the kosher orange gelatin with sliced bananas. During the meal, Bertie began to fuss, and Anita guided his head up under her shirt.

"Is it all right if the baby drinks milk while I eat meat?" she asked. Her mother laughed. "Edna," said her father, "don't encourage her."

Bertie cried when Anita tried to set him down, so she was left alone with her father while her mother did the dishes.

"What *is* this?" she asked him "You never went to *shul* in your life. Aunt Phyllis and Uncle Ron didn't speak to us for a year because on the Saturday of Cousin Simon's bar mitzvah, you *forgot*—you said—and took us all to Rip Van Winkle's Storybook Village."

"I did forget." Her father laughed. "Anyhow, we didn't miss anything. Simon was bar-mitzvahed in the Reform temple. The church."

"The church!" repeated Anita. "Dad, what's the story?"

"THE story, Anita?" Her father took a deep breath. Then he said:

"Once upon a time, a jeweler was taking the subway home to East Flatbush from his shop on 46th Street. At Nostrand, he finally got a seat and opened his *Post* when he heard loud voices at the far end of the car. Looking up, he saw three Puerto Rican kids in sneakers, jeans, and hot-pink silk jackets which said 'Men Working' on the fronts, backs, and sleeves. When he realized that the jackets had been stitched together from the flags Con Ed put up near excavations, he found this so interesting that it took him a while to notice: the kids had knives and were working their way through the car, taking money and jewelry from the passengers and dropping them in a bowling bag. Then he thought: only in New York do thieves wear clothes which glow in the dark. The boys didn't seem to be hurting anyone, but it still didn't make the jeweler comfortable. He thought: is this how it happens? One night you pick the wrong subway car, and bingo! you're an item in the morning paper.

"Halfway down the car, they'd reached an old lady—who started to scream. Then suddenly, the lights began to flash on and off in a definite pattern. Three long blinks, three short blinks, three long blinks—by the fourth SOS the muggers had their noses pressed against the door, and when it opened at the station, they ran. 'Thank God, it's a miracle!' cried the old lady.

"Meanwhile the jeweler had his head between his knees. He was trying to breathe, thinking he

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must have been more scared than he'd known. Then he looked up and saw a young hasidic man watching him from across the aisle.

" 'It wasn't a miracle,' said the Hasid. 'I did it. Follow me out at the next stop.'

"Normally, this jeweler wasn't the type to follow a Hasid out onto the Eastern Parkway station. But all he could think of was: had his wallet been stolen, he'd have had to spend all the next day at the Motor Vehicle Bureau, replacing his license and registration. He felt that he owed somebody something, and if this Hasid was taking credit, keeping him company was the least he could do.

"On the platform, the Hasid pointed to a bare light bulb and said, 'Look.' The light blinked on and off. Then he waved at a buzzing fluorescent light. It blinked too. 'I lied before,' said the Hasid. 'It wasn't my doing. Everything is the rebbe's. . . .' "

Anita's father stopped when her mother came in, drying her hands. "Bertie!" Anita's mother cried, picking the baby up and waltzing him into the kitchen. "Don't listen to this nonsense! A whole life ruined for one blinky light bulb!"

"It wasn't the light," said Anita's father.

Anita wanted to ask if his story really happened or if he'd made it up as a metaphor for what happened. She thought: *something* must have happened. In the old days, her father didn't make up stories. But she forgot her questions when she heard her mother in the kitchen singing "Music, Music, Music" to Bertie, singing "Put another nickel in, in the nickelodeon," sounding just like Teresa Brewer.

Now, five months later, watching the parents of cult members on Donahue, Anita decides that her father's story left out all the important parts. Such as: why he really joined. There's no overlooking the obvious reasons: old age, sickness, death. If they'd been Protestant and he'd converted to Catholicism, no one would have wondered why.

She remembers a weekend this past summer when Jamie was away on business (with Lizzie, she thinks now) and her parents came up to keep her company. Her father drove her to the supermarket to shop for their visit and for Jamie's return. At the checkout stand, the kid who packed their order insisted—over her father's protests—on wheeling the cart out and loading the bags into their (the old man's, the pregnant woman's) car. Like her father, Anita was angry at the kid. Couldn't he see that her father could have done it? Not for nothing did he swim fifteen laps at the JCC pool every Sunday morning. But the crazy thing was: for the whole way home, Anita was mad at her father too.

Her father is still in shape. And despite all the rushing to *shul* every morning and from there to work, he seems pretty relaxed. What's hurting her family, Anita decides, is the unpredictability, the shaky sense that everyone is finally unreliable. What's bothering her mother is that the man she's shared her bed with for thirty-three years has suddenly and without warning rolled to the opposite side. She must wonder if the sheet with the hole in it has been there all along.

Anita wants to tell her mother that there's no guarantee; you can't know anything about anyone. She wants to ask: what's so strange about a man wanting to sing and dance his way into heaven? But if they've never even talked about sex, how can they talk about this?

Anita bundles Bertie up in so many layers he does look like a spaceman, and takes him to the library. On the subway, she notices that the lights flash on and off. The train is almost empty and she thinks about muggers in hot-pink Con Ed jackets, but feels that Bertie is a kind of protection. Babies are unpredictable, like crazy people; she's heard you can sometimes scare muggers away by pretending to be crazy.

The librarians in the Judaica section eye Bertie so suspiciously that he exhausts himself trying to charm them and falls asleep in Anita's arms. Juggling baby and purse, she pulls out some reference books on Hasidism and sits down.

She's surprised at how much she already knows, has picked up from growing up in New York, college, reading, and sheer osmosis. She starts Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*, then decides she must have read it or else heard the stories somewhere. She thinks of Jamie's friend Ira who'd visited once a year from his Orthodox commune in Cambridge, bringing his own food in an Empire Kosher shopping bag. She can't remember him telling stories.

For information about her father's sect, she's directed to the microfilm section. The librarian hands her a flat box, then seeing that it's impossible for her to thread the machine while holding Bertie, gives her a sour smile and does it for her.

For some reason, they've microfilmed whole editions of the city papers. Anita likes flipping back through the pages; it's like reading a story when you already know the end, only eerier. Meanwhile she learns: fifteen years ago, her father's group came from Hungary via Israel to their present home in Brooklyn. In the centerfold of the *Daily News*, there's a photo of the rebbe walking from Kennedy airport to Brooklyn because his plane from Jerusalem had landed on the Sabbath, when he wasn't allowed to ride. Taken at night, the picture is blurred, hard to read. The rebbe is all white hair and white beard, Mr. Natural in a beaver hat. On the next page is an ad for leather boots from Best and Co.; thirty dollars, fifteen years ago, an outrageously low price.

Ironically, the reason Anita can't concentrate is that she's being distracted by the noise from the

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Mitzvahmobile parked on 42nd Street, blaring military-sounding music from its loudspeakers. She pictures the Hasidim darting from one pedestrian to another, asking, "Excuse me, are you Jewish?"

One afternoon, not long after she and Jamie first fell in love, they were approached by the Mitzvahmobilers, and Jamie said, Yes, he was Jewish. They dragged him, literally dragged him, into the trailer. The weather was nice, and nothing in those days seemed like an imposition, so Anita had waited on the library steps till Jamie emerged, looking pale.

Apparently, the Hasidim had tried to teach him how to tie on phylacteries, but he just couldn't get the hang of it. He'd frozen, his hands wouldn't work. Finally they'd given up. They'd placed the phylacteries in his hands, then covered his hands with theirs and just held them—one on his forehead, one on his arm near his heart.

On Friday nights, Anita's father sleeps at the *bet hamidrash* so he won't have to travel on the Sabbath, and her sister Lynne comes for dinner.

As children, Anita and Lynne fought, as their mother says, tooth and nail. Now it's simpler: they love one another—so Anita feels disloyal for thinking that Lynne is just like Valerie Harper playing Rhoda. But it's true, and it's not just the curly hair, the tinted glasses, the running shoes and tight designer jeans. It's Lynne's Master's thesis, "The Changing Role of Women as Reflected in Women's Magazines, 1930-60." It's her job as a social worker in a family-planning clinic and her boyfriend Arnie, who's almost got his degree as a therapist and is already practicing on the Upper West Side.

Lynne and Anita kiss hello. Then Lynne puts her arms around their mother, who's stirring something at the stove, and hugs her for so long that Anita starts feeling uncomfortable. Finally she zeroes in on Bertie, ensconced in his yellow plastic recliner chair on the kitchen table.

"Look how he holds his head up!" says Lynne.

Bertie's been holding his head up since he was two weeks old, and Lynne's seen it, but Anita refrains from pointing this out. Together they set the table, then Lynne pulls her into a corner and asks what she hears from Jamie.

"Oh, he's coming to see Bertie tomorrow."

Lynne stares at Anita, trying to ascertain if this "means" anything. Then she gets her purse and starts rummaging around. She takes out a tortoiseshell case, brushes tobacco dust off it, and gives it to Anita, who knows what it is before she opens it: eye shadow, a palette of different colors.

"Thanks," says Anita. The gift moves her and reminds her of what she's always known: her sister is less of a feminist or a Rhoda than a real magazine reader, a girl who believes in her heart that eye shadow can change your luck.

For Lynne, their mother has cooked the same company dinner she made when Anita first came home. But without their father's blessing, the meat tastes greasy, the potatoes lukewarm; the gelatin has a rubbery skin. His absence should free them, thinks Anita, but he's all they talk about, in voices so low he might as well be downstairs.

With Lynne's coaching, their mother talks, and Anita sees she's been wrong: her mother's unhappiness isn't philosophical, it's practical. Imagine being forced to start keeping a kosher home at the age of fifty-three! Two sets of dishes! The doctor says salting the meat is bad for her heart. The smallest details of life now have rules which Sam won't let her break; she has to take the train to Essex Street to buy special soap for him.

If it gets much worse, Lynne suggests, she might consider a trial separation.

"Who would it help?" their mother asks. "Would it make me happier? Would it make Daddy happier?"

"I doubt it," says Anita.

"What would make me happy," their mother says, "is for Daddy to turn back into his normal self."

Anita wonders what would make *her* happy. Lately, she's not sure. Bertie makes her happy, but it seems important to remember: he'll grow up and leave her. If you can count on anything, she thinks, it's that.

She senses that Lynne is talking less about happiness than about punishment. Lynne feels that their father is responsible for their mother's troubles, just as Jamie is for hers. Anita thinks that no one's to blame for her parents' situation; in her own case, she's partly at fault.

Her first mistake was to gain so much weight when she was pregnant. Why should Jamie have faith she'd lose it when her own doctor didn't? Now she has, but clearly it's too late.

Her second mistake was to quit her job, even if it was the lowest editorial job in the world, the slush pile at *Reader's Digest*. Most of the submissions were for "The Most Unforgettable Character I've Ever Met," and most of these had never done one unforgettable thing except die slowly of some horrible cancer. Jamie liked hearing about them; he said they made him feel better about *his* day. And after she quit and took to reading long novels—anything so long as it went on for more than four hundreds pages—it wasn't the same. She'd try to tell Jamie about the Baron Charlus or Garp's mother, and he'd be staring past her. Once, to test him, she said, "My doctor said it's going to be triplets," and he just kept gazing beyond her out the dark kitchen window at the lights moving slowly up the Hudson.

Which reminds her of her third mistake: they never argued. Lynne, who fights with Arnie over

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every little thing, has told her that she and Jamie were afraid of their anger. Maybe so. Even when Jamie told her he was leaving, Bertie was there, listening to what for him was their first conversation. How could they have fought?

Anita wonders what happened to that part of her that used to fight tooth and nail with Lynne. She imagines Jamie and Lizzie litigating over every avocado in the supermarket. It's the only way she can stand thinking of him in the supermarket with somebody else.

Once, visiting friends in Berkeley, Anita and Jamie went to an all-night supermarket for orange juice. They took a joint for the ride and got so stoned that, when they got there, they couldn't move. They just stood near the vegetable bins, talking, laughing, marveling over the vegetables, those California vegetables!

Once more, Anita feels like she's watching the Zapruder film. She's the only assassination buff who can't even handle a magnifying glass, who wouldn't know a smoking gun if she saw one.

ANITA's wasted the morning trying to think up interesting things to tell Jamie. She's saved the last eight years up in little moments to amuse him. It's all right, though, it's not as if she's staged them for his benefit. If she didn't tell someone, she'd probably just forget.

The problem is, today she can't think of one. She blames this on living in her parents' house, where nothing interesting ever happens. She feels that living there marks her as a boring person with no interesting friends she could have stayed with. But that's not true. She and Bertie would have been welcome in the editing room of Irene's Soho loft, on the couch in Jeanie's Park Slope floor-through. But being home is easier, she doesn't have to be a good guest. If Bertie cries at night, her mother comes in and offers to sing him Teresa Brewer.

One thing she could tell Jamie is what she's noticed at the Pathmark: more and more people seem to be buying huge quantities of specialty items, whole shopping carts full of apricot yogurt, frozen tacos, Sprite in liter plastic jugs. She's heard that American families hardly ever sit down to dinner together. So who knows, maybe there are millions of people out there, each eating only one thing. She could tell him how she took Bertie to the park to see some other babies. He'd slept the whole time, leaving her with the other mothers, none of whom even smiled at her. At one point, a little boy threw sand at a little girl. The girl's mother ran over, grabbed the boy's ankles, and turned him upside down. Anita expected coins to rain out of his pockets like in the movies, but none did. After a while, the boy's mother came over, and instead of yelling at the woman who was shaking her upside-down son, said, "I'm glad it's you and not me." Anita felt as if she'd stumbled in on a game already in progress, like polo or a new kind of poker with complicated rules which no one would stop to explain.

But the last thing she wants is to sound like some pitiful housewife drifting back and forth between the supermarket and the playground. She wonders what sort of lawyer Lizzie is. Corporate taxes, she hopes, but fears it's probably the most interesting cases: mad bombings, ax murders, billion-dollar swindles.

She's tempted to tell Jamie about her father, how for a week or so last month he'd been instructed by his rebbe: instead of saying grace, he should clap his hands whenever the spirit of thanksgiving moved him. In the hour-and-a-half it took to eat—with her father dropping his silverware, clapping, shutting his eyes as if smelling something sweet—Anita tried to predict these outbursts, but couldn't; she'd thought of the retarded people one heard sometimes in movie theaters, shouting out randomly, for no reason. She could tell Jamie how her father came home in a green velvet Tyrolean hat with a feather; apparently, the rebbe had given out dozens of hats to illustrate his sermon: the righteous man must climb this world like a mountain.

But she knows that telling Jamie would only make her angry at him for not being around tomorrow when she'll need to tell him the next installment. Nor does it make her happy right now to think that Jamie knows her father well enough to know: in the old days, he wouldn't have been caught dead in a Tyrolean hat.

The obvious subject is Bertie. Everything he does interests her; she thinks he's a genius. Why can't she tell Jamie about his practiced smiles, about his picking up his own Cheerios? Why? Because what could be more pitiful than thinking that anyone cares if your five-month-old can pick up his own Cheerios?

Bertie's victory over Cheerios should be their victory. Instead she can hardly talk about Bertie; it's as if she's accusing Jamie. Bertie should be the mortar cementing them; as it is, he's part of the wall.

When Jamie rings the doorbell, Anita half-hopes that Bertie—who hasn't seen his father for two weeks—will not recognize him and scream. Bertie looks at Jamie, then at Anita, then at Jamie, then smiles a smile which anyone could tell is his real one.

ANITA's mother says, "Jamie!" She says, "There's apple cake in the fridge if you kids get hungry." Then she backs out of the room. It's so uncomfortable they could be high schoolers dating—except for the presence of Bertie and the fact that Anita and Jamie didn't know each other in high school.

"Can we go for a walk somewhere?" Jamie is staring to the side of Anita's head at Bertie. Anita

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feels as if he's asking Bertie out and is one of those guys who's scared to be alone with his date. She's the friend he drags along, the chaperone.

"Sure," says Anita. Bertie's wriggling so hard his feet jam halfway down the legs of his snowsuit and she has to thread them through. She knows she's making herself look incompetent, making the process of dressing Bertie look harder than it is.

On the way to the park she can't think of anything to say. She doesn't want to discuss specialty items at the Pathmark or the upside-down boy. Of course she's done this before, rehearsed whole conversations which turned out to be inappropriate. But never with Jamie.

The playground is chilly, almost deserted. In one corner, two five-year-old boys are playing soccer while their parents—all four of them in ponytails—hunker on the ground, passing a joint. There's a dressed-up Orthodox family sitting in a row on a bench. By the swings, a young mother says to her daughter, "Okay, ten more pushes and we're going home." And finally there are some boys— ten, eleven, twelve—playing very hard and punishingly on the jungle gym and slide, as if it's the playground equipment's fault that they've grown too big for it.

"When is Bertie going to be old enough for the slide?" asks Jamie.

"Tomorrow," says Anita.

The mother by the swings counts to ten, and when the little girl says "Ten more!" grabs her daughter's hand and pulls her out of the park. Jamie sits down on one of the swings and stretches his arms out for Bertie. Holding the baby on his lap, Jamie pushes off. Anita can't look till she reassures herself: she trusts Jamie that much—not to drop Bertie. She sits on the other swing and watches Bertie, who is leaning forward to see where they're going before they get there.

"Look how he holds his head up," says Jamie. "That's my boy."

"He's been doing that for four months," says Anita.

JAMIE trails his long legs in the sand and stops with a bump. "Anita," he says, "just what am I supposed to do? What do you want?"

Anita wonders what she does want. She's not sure she wants to be back with Jamie. Bertie or no Bertie, it's too late. Something's happened which can't be fixed. Basically, she wants what her mother wants: for everything to be the way it was before everything changed.

"I want to know one thing," she says. "Remember that garden party at Mel's?"

"What about it?" says Jamie.

Anita remembers a buffet of elegant, salty things —sun-dried tomatoes, smoked salmon—which by then she wasn't allowed to eat. "I want to know if you and Lizzie were already. . . ." She thinks: if a woman could walk clear across a party to feel her lover's wife's belly, her lover's unborn child inside it, well then, you really can't know anything about people.

Jamie says, "Of course not," in a tone which makes Anita suspect it began at that party, or thereabouts. She wonders: did their fingers brush accidentally over a Lebanese olive? A long look near the pesto and sour-cream dip?

"It wasn't Lizzie." Jamie's swinging again, distractedly. "It wasn't you."

"Who was it?" she says. "Don't blame Bertie, he wasn't born yet."

"It wasn't the baby. It was me. Listen." Jamie stops himself by grabbing the chain on her swing together with his. The seats tilt together crazily. "When I was in the seventh grade, there was a kid in my class named Mitchell Pearlman. One day we got to talking about our dads, and Mitchell said that his was a photographer. He'd been everywhere, done everything. Had he fought with the Mau Maus? Sure. Sipped tea with Queen Elizabeth? Of course. Lived with the Eskimos, crossed the Sahara on a camel? You bet.

"Naturally we thought he was lying till we went to his house for his birthday. The minute we met Mitchell Pearlman's father—mustache, jeans, big silver belt buckle—we began to think Mitchell was telling the truth. After the cake and ice cream, his father brought out the pictures of himself in front of the igloo, the camel, arm in arm with Jomo Kenyatta, dandling the baby Prince Charles on his knee. And for months after that, for years, I hated my own father. I wouldn't speak to him."

"So?" says Anita. "I don't get it."

"So when Bertie was born, I suddenly thought: in a couple of years, he'll be me in the seventh grade. And I'll be my father. And he'll go out and find his own Mitchell Pearlman's father. And he'll hate me. I thought: we've made a terrible mistake! We should have waited to have Bertie till I *was* Mitchell Pearlman's father! Does this make any sense?" There are tears in Jamie's eyes.

Anita thinks: not much. For one thing, the chronology's wrong. Jamie fell in love *before* Bertie was born. For another, Bertie isn't Jamie and Jamie isn't his father. Jamie's father owns a dry-cleaners, while Jamie is a labor lawyer with interesting cases. She wants to shout at him that exchanging long looks with a lady lawyer over the pesto is nothing—nothing at all—like fighting with the Mau Maus. But she doesn't. She's beginning to see that her sister's right: this *is* something some men do. Jamie himself doesn't understand, any more than Mitchell Pearlman's father understood why he found it so easy to leave the wife and kids and take off across the Sahara.

She imagines Jamie ten years hence, taking Bertie out for the afternoon. He's one of those weekend fathers she never really noticed till she

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was pregnant, and then she saw them everywhere. She could always tell how uneasy it made them to take their kids places whole families went. Recently she read in the *Times*: there's a health club in Manhattan which, on Saturdays and Sundays, caters exclusively to single fathers and their children. Ten years from now, there will be hundreds of these places.

She imagines men and children lolling in a steamy pool, pumping exercycles, straining on Nautilus machines. There are no women in her vision, it's as if all the mothers have died of some plague. She hears the cries of the children, sees the shoulders of the fathers rounded as if from the weight of the children tugging their arms.

The only thing she can't picture is how Bertie will look in ten years' time.

FOR weeks, her father has been asking her to come to a service in his *shul*. "The worst that'll happen is that you'll have fun," he says. It's made Anita a little nervous, like having a Moonie ask her to go away for the weekend. But the day after Jamie's visit, she agrees. There's nothing but football on TV.

"Can me and Bertie sit in the same section?" she asks.

"Don't be smart," says her father.

When she comes downstairs in a turtleneck and good brown corduroy jeans, she sees him really suffering with embarrassment. She goes and changes into a long skirt from the back of her closet, Indian print from the 60's.

On the drive down Eastern Parkway, Anita and her father don't talk. Again she has the peculiar feeling of being on a date. There's not much traffic on this Sunday, and everything seems so slowed down that she's slow to notice: her father's whole driving style has changed. He used to zip around like a cabbie—teeth-grinding, swerving, cursing. Now he keeps to his lane, he's got all the time in the world. His elbow is out the side window, cold air is rushing into the car.

"Can you shut that?" says Anita. "The baby."

"Sure," says her father. "Sorry."

"What kind of service are we going to?"

"A wedding."

"Turn the car around," says Anita.

"Don't be stupid," says her father. "Would you have preferred a funeral? All right. Next time, a funeral."

"What next time?" says Anita.

"You'll be interested," says her father. "The ceremony is outside under the stars."

"Stars you can see from Crown Heights?" says Anita. "I'll be interested."

In the old days, her father used to start looking for parking places miles in advance. She remembers hours of accelerating, then falling forward as the brakes squealed in the search for a spot in Chinatown. Now as they pull up to the block on which hundreds of Hasidim are milling around, her father cruises smoothly into an empty space.

THE short winter afternoon is darkening. The street lights come on. The air is crisp and clear. The men wear nearly identical black coats, the women's are of various subdued hues. Most of the women are in high, good leather boots which remind Anita of the ad on the microfilm. It's easy to spot the converts like her father in his fur-collared car coat, the young men in denim and down; it annoys her that several young women wear paisley skirts much like hers.

The crowd spills off the sidewalk, blocking the northbound lane, but the two cops parked in their squad car ignore it. Leaning on other cars, Puerto Rican kids in sweatshirts and down vests idly stroke their girlfriends as they watch the Hasidim assemble. The wedding canopy is already up, held by four men who keep switching the pole from hand to hand so they can warm the free hand in their pockets.

Suddenly everyone's buzzing like bees. Anita's father leans forward and says, "The rebbe."

Anita stands on tiptoe. But from a quarter-block away, the rebbe looks pretty much like the photo: Mr. Natural. That's another reason she could never join this sect: being female, she'd never get closer to the rebbe than this. She turns to say this to her father, but he's gone—drawn, she imagines, toward his rebbe.

The crowd buzzes again when the bride and groom appear. The bride's leaning on some women, the groom on some men. They both look ready to drop. When Anita gets a good look at the groom—gangly, skin the color of skim milk—she understands why the bride can hardly walk. How could anyone marry *that*?

Nearly rigid in his quilted snowsuit, Bertie's getting heavy. Anita holds him up though she knows he's too young to focus on the center of attention, too young to know there is a center. To Bertie, everything's the center: the scarf of the woman in front of him, his own inaccessible fist.

Anita thinks: the bride must be freezing. Maybe that's why she's so hunched over as the women lead her in circles around the groom. Under the veil, she could be anything—old, ugly, sick, some covered-up temple idol. No wonder the groom is so panicky!

Even with all the Hebrew prayers, the ceremony is over in no time. They always are, thinks Anita, except when people write their own. Real religions and even the state seem to know: if it drags on too long, somebody *will* faint. Anita and Jamie got married impulsively in a small town on the California-Nevada border. What she mostly remembers is sitting in a diner in Truckee, writing post cards to all their friends saying that she'd just been married in the Donner Pass by a one-armed Justice of the Peace.

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Her thoughts are interrupted by cheers; the groom has broken the glass. Then bride and groom and wedding canopy disappear in the crowd bearing them—and Anita and Bertie—into the hall.

Just inside the door, the men and women peel off in opposite directions. Anita follows the women into a large room with a wooden dance floor surrounded by round tables, set with centerpieces of pink carnations in squat crystal vases and groupings of ginger ale and seltzer bottles.

No one's saving places, jockeying to be near friends. The ladies just sit. Anita stands for a minute or so, then sees two women beckoning and patting the chair between them, so she goes and sits down. She soon understands why the women have found places so quickly: it doesn't matter where they sit, no one stays put for more than two seconds. They kiss and gab, then get up, sit next to a friend at another table, kiss and gab some more. Meanwhile the waiters are weaving through with bowls of hot soup, shouting to the women to get out of their way. But no one's paying attention.

The woman to Anita's right is middle-aged and kind of pretty. She's Mrs. Lesser. When the waiter brings Anita's soup, Mrs. Lesser pushes it away so Anita won't spill it in her struggle with Bertie's zipper.

"Your first baby?" asks Mrs. Lesser.

"Yes," says Anita.

"I had my first when I was sixteen. Can you believe I'm a grandmother?"

Anita might not have thought it, but she can believe it; she doesn't know quite what to say.

"Can *you* believe it?" Mrs. Lesser puts her big face near Bertie's little one, and Bertie rewards her with his most radiant, sweetest, and most inauthentic social smile.

"Look at this baby smile!" Mrs. Lesser says to the whole table. "Look at this sweetheart!" It's Anita's introduction to the room at large, and all at once it's open season on Bertie. Mrs. Lesser gets up and someone else sits down and starts stroking Bertie's cheek.

These women have children and grandchildren of their own, thinks Anita. Why are they so interested? But they are, they're full of questions. How old is he? What's his name? Does he sleep through the night? Is he always so good?

Anita feels like Bertie's ventriloquist. She has to make an effort to speak in her normal voice as she says, "His name's Bertie. He's five months old. He can pick up his own Cheerios."

"Cheerios?" cry the women. "At five months? He's a genius!"

The partition separating the men's and women's sections stops a few feet from the ceiling. Anita's facing it when suddenly she sees three furry brown things fly up, then plummet, then fly again. Just as she figures out someone's juggling hats, she hears applause from the other side of the plywood.

With each course, a different woman is making Bertie smile and nibbling from whatever plate the waiter has put down. First comes stuffed derma, then a platter of thick roast beef, little round potatoes, canned peas. Anita picks up a forkful of peas. She isn't very hungry, it isn't very good. No one's eating much; even the fleshiest ladies are just tasting. But every woman who sits down offers to hold Bertie for Anita, or to cut her roast beef. They say to Bertie, "Too bad you can't eat roast beef, pussycat," and "Next year at this time you'll be munching little brown potatoes."

Slowly at first, the men begin dancing. Anita feels it through the floor before she hears it. Stamp, stamp. Soon the silverware is rattling, the peas are jumping on her plate. The stamping gets faster, there are shouts. Anita wonders if her father is dancing. Probably he is. The door between the two sections is open, children are running back and forth. No one would stop her from looking. But she doesn't, she just doesn't.

Singing, clapping, the men make their own music. The women have help. Two men come in with an accordion and a mandolin. The women dance sweetly in couples, a dance which seems part waltz, part foxtrot, part polka. Mrs. Lesser reappears, and when a sprightly gray-haired lady to the far side of her makes swaying motions with her arms, Mrs. Lesser says, "If you're asking, I'm dancing," and away they go. A tiny old woman approaches Anita and says, "Would the baby care to dance?"

All the women want to dance with Bertie. Young and old, they keep cutting in, passing him around. Anita catches glimpses of him, first with this one, then with that, sailing, swaying to the music, resting his cheek on their pillowy breasts. When Mrs. Lesser sits back down, she asks where the baby is.

"Dancing," says Anita.

Mrs. Lesser cranes her neck. "He's smiling," she says. "He's the belle of the ball!"

Suddenly there's a whoop from the other room, and Anita sees the groom's head and shoulders over the partition. From the angle of his head, the stricken expression, she knows that this is the part where the men hoist the groom up in a chair and dance. Then the women gather and raise the bride's chair. The music gets louder and the women begin circling the bride, dancing with enough intensity that Anita goes and finds Bertie and takes him back.

At last the bride's chair is nearly touching the ceiling. Above the partition, she and the groom look at each other. Anita wants to study this look. She thinks it's something she should pay close attention to. But she's only half-watching. Mostly she's concentrating on not dropping Bertie, whom she's holding up above her head.

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"Look, sweetheart," she's saying. "Look at the lady in the chair!"

BERTIE sings when he nurses, a sweet satisfied gulping and humming high in his nose. On the night of the wedding, Anita falls asleep while he's nursing, and his song turns into the song in her dream.

In her dream, Bertie's singing "Music, Music, Music" just like Teresa Brewer. He's still baby Bertie, but he's up on stage, smiling one of his phony smiles, making big stagey gestures like Shirley Temple or those awful children in *Annie*. One of these gestures is the "okay" sign, thumb and forefinger joined. The circle his fingers make reminds her of the Buddha. It reminds her of a Cheerio.

Anita wakes up laughing, wondering how a little baby could know words like "nickelodeon." She gets up and, without detaching Bertie from her breast, slips a bathrobe over both of them and goes downstairs. Except for her parents' bedroom, where earlier she's heard her mother preparing for sleep, every room is lit up. In the kitchen, light is shining from around the edges of the cellar door. Anita and Bertie go down.

Opening the door to the family room, she sees her father sitting cross-legged on the cork-tiled floor. His eyes are shut and tears are shining on his cheeks. But he's not so out of it that he doesn't hear her come in. Looking up, he seems frail and embarrassed, an old man caught doing something he's not supposed to do.

Anita wants to apologize and leave. Then it dawns on her that she's not down there to bother him. There's something she wants to ask, but she's not sure what it is. She wants to ask why all the lights in the house are always on. She wants to ask who he thinks is paying the electric bills.

Anita's father stands up and dries his eyes with his palm. Then he says, "Hold up your hand."

Anita holds up her hand and he lifts his, palm facing hers, a few inches away. He asks if she feels anything.

She feels something. A pressure.

She remembers how when she was in labor with Bertie, she held Jamie's hand. Just before the nurses let her start pushing, she turned to Jamie and said, "I don't think I can do this." "Sure you can," he said, and squeezed her hand so hard she'd thought it was broken. By the time it stopped hurting, the contraction was over and she knew she could go on. Now she sees that Jamie didn't mean to hurt her. He was scared too.

Her father's hand is still a few inches away, but its hold feels as tight as Jamie's. She can almost feel electrons jumping over the space between them, electricity drawing them as close as she is to Bertie, who just at that moment lets go of her breast and sits up, watching them.

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Bergman Discovers Love

Richard Grenier

INGMAR BERGMAN has described himself in the years before World War II—during the Hitler period—as a "pro-German fanatic," a political orientation which, by his own admission, lasted until 1945 when he was twenty-seven. This is a picturesque detail to which I shall later return, but for understanding Bergman's early films the most significant fact of his youth is that his father was a Lutheran pastor, chaplain, in fact, to the royal house of Sweden.

The first film ever released in the United States with which Bergman had been connected was one that he had written (not directed). Called *Hets* ("Torment"), it was given a spectacular reception in the late 1940's by critics and the American film-going public. Its star was Mai Zetterling, who briefly became famous, even going to Hollywood to co-star with Danny Kaye. Hollywood's idea of a religious movie in those days was Bing Crosby's *Going My Way* and Jennifer Jones in *The Song of Bernadette*, and the sudden immersion in the Kierkegaardian world of Ingmar Bergman, where man lives in a state of depravity, in terror of an angry God, must have produced something of a shock.

The first important film which Bergman was allowed to direct as well as write was *Fängelse* ("Prison"), released in 1949. The plot concerns a young prostitute who eventually commits suicide (suicide was to remain a Bergman leitmotif for many years). But the handling of the story could not be more different from the way a "liberal" writer-director would deal with the subject today. In the young woman's somber conversations with a journalist (who seems more cleric than reporter), we are not told that her condition is the fault of society, or capitalism, or poverty, or unemployment. The film, instead, is peppered with references to God and the Devil, good and evil, life and death.

In 1953, Bergman made two quite remarkable movies, *Summer With Monika* and *Gycklarnas Afton* (called in Britain "Sawdust and Tinsel" and in America "The Naked Night"), both starring Harriet Andersson. In *Summer With Monika* a young, middle-class Swede is smitten with the easy sexuality of a beautiful working-class girl from south Stockholm. They spend their summer holiday together. There are nude love scenes on the beach. The young man is in love and seems to have found that paradise of the senses of which he has always dreamed. But, the summer over, Monika shows that in addition to being sensual and lighthearted she is also fickle, and breezily drops him for someone new, leaving him alone and disconsolate. The final frames of the movie, a seeming commentary on the fleeting nature of happiness, are of an unmitigated bleakness.

But it was in *The Naked Night* that Bergman attained his full range of expression. He secured for the first time the priceless talents of Sven Nyquist, one of the world's great cinematographers, from whom he was never again to be separated. And it was perhaps because of Nyquist's visual virtuosity that it occurred to me (when I later saw *The Naked Night*) that the leading dramatic influence on Bergman's work of this period was not August Strindberg, as was often said, but the great Norwegian expressionist painter Edvard Munch —whose most famous single painting is probably *The Shriek*, with its scream of horror at what can only be the human condition. *The Naked Night*, in any event, is straight Munch. The story is about the members of a small-time traveling circus who experience, collectively, a kind of metaphysical nightmare: sexual betrayal; a clown, hysterical with despair, trying to kill himself in the middle of the night in a circus wagon rolling over a forsaken countryside; an older woman putting her bear through his pathetic tricks. This is *The Naked Night* of the soul, of all of us.

At this point, Bergman was still virtually unknown outside his native country. It required *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955) and *The Seventh Seal* (1957), both of which won prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, to launch him upon the world. *Smiles of a Summer Night*, which was later brought to Broadway in vulgarized musical form as *A Little Night Music* (which in turn was to become a disastrously unsuccessful movie in its own right), has been called a "comedy of manners," an expression I am not entirely happy with. It shows, in any case, Bergman in a lighter mood. But in *The Seventh Seal* he was doing business again at the old stand. An allegorical tale set in the Middle Ages, the film deals openly with the relationship of God and man. Death, all dressed in black, appears periodically to debate mortality with a knight (Max von Sydow) just returned from the Crusades. Gunnar Björnstrand plays the knight's squire, Bibi Andersson represents some kind of beautiful innocence, and the whole film is wonderfully cast and directed. Swedes have always warned me that if I understood Swedish I would find Bergman's metaphysical discourses on God and mortality stale and platitudinous (a warning that came back to me most acridly when I heard Elliott Gould's lines in English in Bergman's *The Touch* and the speeches of an entire English-speaking cast in his 1977 *The Serpent's Egg*). But, my eyes bouncing up and down and with only the subtitles for guidance, I considered

RICHARD GRENIER's *novel,* The Marrakesh One-Two, *has just been nominated for a National Book Critics Circle award.*

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his films of the 50's and early 60's very impressive. *Wild Strawberries,* made the same year as *The Seventh Seal,* explores the problem of man's isolation. But with Alf Sjöberg, the famous director, playing the self-centered, allegedly loveless old curmudgeon, the effect is considerably softened, which might help to explain the film's great commercial success. (Coincidentally, Sjöberg had directed *Hets.*)

Bergman stuck by his favorite themes through the early 60's. *The Virgin Spring* (1960) is another medieval allegory. A metaphysical trilogy (*Through a Glass Darkly, Winter Light, The Silence*) is about people who are seeking God, or have lost Him. In my favorite, *Winter Light,* a pastor (Gunnar Björnstrand), in an isolated parish in the north of Sweden, tries to bring God to a flock which has so dwindled that his church is almost deserted. Yet, desperately, he preaches on.

In 1964, Bergman, quite out of character, made a broad sexual farce called *All These Women,* his first film in color. In a fit of narcissism, he filled the roles of all seven leading ladies with his own ex-wives and ex-mistresses. It was unquestionably an appalling movie, the worst he had ever made, and was also a financial disaster. Having failed at broad comedy, he began casting about, perhaps looking for something new, in keeping with the spirit of the times. Two years later, in *Persona* (1966), his first film with Liv Ullmann, he abandoned God for Sigmund Freud.

For all I know, Bergman had never believed in God to begin with. Perhaps it had all been just theater. But the religious faith of his ancestors had plainly struck a responsive chord in him. When he entered the world of Freud and psychological behavior, however, his work declined precipitously in quality. *Persona, Shame, The Passion of Anna, The Touch,* and *Scenes from a Marriage* were just superior Swedish soap opera. *Cries and Whispers,* despite flashes of the old Bergman and its great commercial success, I do not place much higher. *The Magic Flute,* although well directed, is after all Mozart.

In my view, in sum, all of Bergman's great films were made in one ten-year burst from 1953 to 1963. When the 60's hit Bergman, he abandoned God, death, and the Kierkegaardian despair that had been his hallmark in favor of psychology and a form of elevated soap opera. But the director's last phase began in 1976 when he was arrested in Stockholm by two plain-clothes policemen, booked at a nearby police station, and charged with income-tax fraud. Shortly afterward, Bergman suffered a deep nervous breakdown and was hospitalized in a state of extreme depression.

Although the charges were dropped and he was implored by the Swedish Prime Minister himself to continue his career, Bergman went into self-imposed exile. He has since returned to Sweden, "forgiven" his homeland, and resumed directing. But hardly a shred of the old Bergman remains, and his latest film, *Fanny and Alexander*—the virtual antithesis of the movies that won him his reputation—has as its basis a kind of groveling, pseudo-Hindu *Love, Love, Love,* as if Bergman, like nothing so much as an overage flower child, had just come under the influence of a Charles Reichian *Greening of Sweden,* and joined the counterculture.

He has made several statements about this new movie: first, that it is "the sum total of my life as a film-maker." This is about as deceptive or self-deluded a statement as an artist has ever made about his own work. Bergman has also said that *Fanny and Alexander* is "a declaration of love for life." About this we shall see.

THE film takes place in 1907 in a prosperous Swedish provincial town and centers on a large, rich, "extended" family whose youngest members are the grandchildren, the eponymous Fanny and Alexander. The story is "seen" through the eyes of the ten-year-old Alexander—a dramatic technique that requires him to be simply present as an impassive witness at some of the movie's key scenes. If Alexander played too active a part it would become "his" movie, a child's story, so instead he merely looks on, and we look at him looking on. The head of the family is Helena Ekdahl, the grandmother, a former actress now a widow. Judging by the size of her luxurious home, with its half-dozen uniformed servants, her largesse to her less provident sons, and even the obviously costly wardrobes of little Fanny and Alexander, it is clear that Helena must have married far above her station—in fact, into one of this Swedish provincial town's very richest families. Yet we never meet a single one of her late husband's family—the original Ekdahls—and we never learn how they acquired their wealth (timber? mining? ball bearings?). However it was, its money-grubbing nature would inevitably jar with the family Helena has raised, which is essentially artistic.

Those unaware of the humiliatingly low economic and social status of actors in the period in question have only to read the novels of the late Jean Rhys, set in an even later period. In the early days of Hollywood—the social circumstances of which now seem to have been erased from the memory of the race—rooming houses quite commonly carried signs reading: "NO DOGS OR ACTORS." So Grandmother Helena, as can be seen, married very well indeed.

Fanny and Alexander opens with lavish Christmas celebrations at the opulent Ekdahl family home, including—from grandmother, to children, to grandchildren, to servants—in all, twenty-six persons. There is joy. There is laughter. There is love. There is good eating. There is singing, and dancing hand-in-hand throughout the palatial Edwardian house. During the holiday celebrations we learn most of what we need to know about Helena and her family. Her oldest son has succeeded her in directing the family-owned theater and, although a bad actor himself, is lovable, both in his manner and in his dedication to his theater, his company, and his art. He has a beautiful young wife, Emilie, also an actress. Fanny and Alexander are their children. Another of grandmother's sons is lovable in a slightly more unusual way. He is a businessman, runs a successful luxury restaurant, and is an ebullient, irrepressible philanderer.

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What is remarkable about this is that no one is hurt or takes the slightest offense at what the publicity material accompanying the film calls his "kindly, delightful hedonism." His wife finds his adulteries charming, as do his sister-in-law, his mother, and even his daughter. His wife and family giggle and joke about it simply all the time. His principal paramour is one of the family servants, and a very pretty one, but (now this is interesting) she is also lame. I have no doubt at all that this fact establishes Uncle Gustav Adolf as a *humanistic* philanderer. He sets his servant-mistress up in her own pastry shop. Yesterday but a house servant, she is accepted on terms of equality into the wealthy Ekdahl family. No Fannie Hurst *Back Street* for her. And, wonder of wonders, all class distinctions having been totally volatilized, Gustav Adolf's lame mistress and Gustav Adolf's legitimate daughter, one of the wealthy Ekdahls, announce their plans of opening a milliner's shop together.

Grandmother Helena's third son, a professor, is less lovable than the other two, but has rare gifts at what the French call *pétomanie*. Which is to say that he performs prodigies of flatulence, at one point succeeding in blowing out a candle to the delight of the assembled children. He is also a drunk, which is arguably lovable.

But to my mind the most interesting participant in the Ekdahls' Christmas celebrations is the only one not related to them by blood or marriage, an old Jew named Isak (Erland Josephson of *Scenes from a Marriage*), by his habit Orthodox, by profession an antique dealer and moneylender. Now an Orthodox Jewish moneylender is not the first person one would expect to see at a socially prominent Christian family's Christmas celebrations (could he even touch the food?), but we are told that he is "an old friend of the family," and learn shortly that he and Helena had once been passionate lovers—behind the back of her husband, who not only supported her in a manner to which she had never been accustomed but also provided the wealth the Ekdahls are still enjoying. Late in the evening Helena reminisces with Isak about the fevered kisses they once exchanged. "You had unbuttoned my blouse—I think you'd unbuttoned your trousers too. . . ." Whereupon her husband entered, and, after a brief pique, the three of them became "friends for life."

"If you have no dark passages," says Ingmar Bergman, "you cannot see the lighter side." So into the life of the joyful, loving, vital Ekdahls, a little rain falls. The father of Fanny and Alexander, the theater manager, dies. But this brings their beautiful mother Emilie an imposing new suitor, a cleric, Bishop Vergerus, who becomes, rather speedily, her husband and the children's stepfather. The death also provides the movie, which with all this loving was beginning to turn in circles, with a second act.

Those unfamiliar with the clerics and other seekers after God of Bergman's major period can hardly appreciate the shock of his portrayal of Bishop Vergerus. The bishop, stern and handsome, is shown even in his first scene to be overbearing, smug, and sanctimonious. But it is after the marriage that he reveals himself as a true monster. One might think that Emilie might have sounded him out earlier on this, but she is astonished when the bishop demands that she and her children leave everything behind them, their pretty clothes, their distractions, their toys, to join him in a life of monastic austerity. (There was a time in early Bergman when austerity might have been seen as drawing men closer to God, but the director is now in his Timothy Leary period.) The bishop, in any event, does not stop at austerity. He must bend his new family entirely to his tyrannical will. He whips his stepson Alexander, locks his new wife Emilie in a special room to break her spirit. There are rumors that he drove his earlier wife and children to suicide. The bishop's whole entourage is repellent. His sister is a malicious hysteric, his mother an icy-eyed martinet, his aunt a morbid, bedridden invalid. He has a neurotic servant (Harriet Andersson) who continually scrapes an open sore to keep the wound festering. Emilie's love for the bishop rapidly turns into hatred, but she dare not desert him, for, with this morally reprehensible act against her, the bishop would retain custody of her children.

It turns out, however (Act 3), that the old Jew Isak, besides being an antique dealer and moneylender, is also a necromancer (this is the first appearance in the film of any magic). He spirits the two children away from the wicked bishop and hides them in the nether regions of his antique shop, which at this point suddenly expands into a labyrinthine storeroom of figures for the paintings of James Ensor. Alexander, moreover, wandering about at night, crosses into a forbidden zone and encounters Isak's shame, his sequestered nephew Ismael, who is (1) insane, (2) homosexual (played by a woman), and (3) capable of such Semitic sorcery as to put his uncle to shame. While caressing the impassive Alexander, and without so much as a beetle's leg or a frog's eye, Ismael causes the following to come about, and at many miles' distance. At the bishop's monastery-like palace, his invalid, bedridden aunt knocks over an oil lamp, setting herself on fire. In agony, blazing like a torch, she runs screaming into the bishop's bedroom, setting him on fire, too. The next morning they are found dead, the flames having consumed them both. So if you want a little piece of effective sorcery, stick with the Jews. They have these strange powers. Either that or, Ismael being an Arab name, it is the Arabs who have the strange powers. They are related, are they not? (I have no doubt, incidentally, that in Bergman's symbolist language the sequestered Ismael is an appeal for a "Free Palestine.")

Emilie and her children, in any event, return rapturously to the bosom of the Ekdahl family, which resumes its joyful, loving, vital life of "good food, gentle smiles, fruit trees in bloom, waltzes" (I am quoting from a speech).

The full published text of *Fanny and Alexander*,* contains an inter-

*Pantheon, 216 pp., $13.95.

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esting stage direction—clearly reflected in the film itself. As the bishop's pathetic, bedridden aunt lifts her hand with great effort and lays it on the hot paraffin lamp, an action which leads to her horrible death, Bergman writes as follows:

> There is no counsel for the defense, who, orally or in writing, has a mind to plead Elsa Bergius's cause. She is repulsive, she is rotting, a parasite, a monster. Her part will soon be played out. She is a loaf that hasn't risen in the world's batch and it is no use wasting pity on such an utter failure.

So amid all the loving, and caring, and joyful hedonism, a poor invalid burns to death. But we must "waste no pity" on such a repulsive creature because she hasn't risen in the world's batch, because her part is played out, because she is a failure.

Now the reader will have noticed that, having mentioned Bergman's youthful fascination with Hitler's Germany at the beginning of this essay, I dropped it during my discussion of his major films on God, death, mortality, and the human condition. When he left God for Freud and psychology it did not seem relevant. But now that he has changed sides and gone over to "love," hedonism, and all that, and decided there is a real enemy again (curiously enough, the same God-ridden people he once professed to admire), I find myself thinking again of the freely confessed political enthusiasms of Bergman's youth. There were at that time many young men in Germany who thought "parasites" and "failures" were totally unworthy of human pity, and these young men wore death's heads on their caps and marched to the orders of Heinrich Himmler. Think on't.

An intelligent critic, David Brudnoy, has made a respectable case that *Fanny and Alexander* is a comedy. And I certainly agree with him to the extent that if you are to enjoy the film at all you must find it comic. But Bergman himself tells us that the movie is a "declaration of love for life." And, particularly since it doesn't make me laugh much, and is filled with such preachy and mawkish speeches, I am inclined to think that this is what Bergman feels the film really is. Which compels me, for my part, to state that I do not for one second believe in this joyful, loving Ekdahl family. I do not believe Uncle Gustav Adolf's wife is delightfully amused at his persistent adultery. I don't believe the lame servant-mistress is generously embraced by the family. I don't believe Helena Ekdahl's late husband became lifelong friends with her Jewish lover. I don't believe in the Jewish lover. I want to know what he ate at Christmas. I don't believe one word of this "love" glup that runs from one end of the film to the other. When Ingmar Bergman talked to me of God and death I respected him despite his past political sympathies. But now that he's prattling on about love, and gentle smiles, and fruit trees in bloom, I think something in him has snapped.

Fiction

Cozzens Repossessed

Joseph Epstein

"In what century did he live?" asked the graduate student in literature to whom I mentioned that I had been reading the novels of James Gould Cozzens. "In what century do you?" I was tempted to reply, but I didn't. I didn't, because to do so, along with being mean-spirited, would also have been unfair. After all, in the history of modern American literary reputations, James Gould Cozzens's has provided one of the fastest disappearing acts of the past fifty years. In a few decades Cozzens has gone from a Book-of-the-Month Club main selection and *Time* cover subject to the misty never-never land—never in print, never taught in universities—of such faded literary figures as James Branch Cabell, Zona Gale, and Joseph Hergesheimer. It has happened before, but never, I think, quite so quickly as in the case of James Gould Cozzens.

Various are the reasons a novelist can fall out of fashion and favor. First among them is that he was overrated in the first place, and that the natural readjustment of initial enthusiasm has a dampening, even deadly, effect. Then again it may be that his work speaks only to the time in which he wrote it—such, for example, seems to me the case with Sinclair Lewis. Or our author may write altogether too plainly, providing few of those enticing difficulties in interpretation and opportunities for classroom demonstration that seem to

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set flowing the salivary glands of certain academics. Or he may have no powerful champions among the critical establishment. Or, as with the later John Dos Passos, his politics may go against the grain of his age. Or, for a combination of the above reasons (excluding the first), he may not capture the fancy of the intellectual class, which may hold his very popularity against him; this for a great many years was a serious problem for Charles Dickens. The more one adduces reasons for the fall in literary reputation, the more does it seem extraordinary that any literary reputations below that of Tolstoy endure at all.

But with James Gould Cozzens, even though a number of the reasons I have noted apply, the chief cause of the fall of his literary reputation can be found with real precision. Like an eclipse of the moon, it can even be dated. It occurred in January 1958, when COMMENTARY published an essay by Dwight Macdonald entitled "By Cozzens Possessed." To say that this essay was an attack is not to begin to catch the flavor of it. It was a toasting, a roasting, a pasting, a lambasting, a drawing and quartering —well, you have to imagine a death by broad-ax and tweezers. Not since the St. Valentine's Day Massacre has there been so efficient a piece of work. I for one was put off by it from reading Cozzens for a full quarter of a century.

Since Dwight Macdonald's attack, Cozzens has had his small band of followers—a little Cozzens club of sorts. But no powerhouse critics have been among its members. Nor has the pendulum of literary fashion swung back enough to allow Cozzens a second reading. For years now he has been categorized in clichés: he is a novelist who speaks for power and privilege; his work resembles that of Louis Auchincloss; he is admired only by conservatives of the *National Review* stripe. This, then, is where things stand.

Now a biography of Cozzens written by Matthew J. Bruccoli* has appeared. Himself a long-standing member of the Cozzens club, Professor Bruccoli earlier produced a book entitled *Just Representations: A James Gould Cozzens Reader*, but his biography is no more likely to alter Cozzens's reputation than his anthology did. Although often just in its judgments, and sympathetic to its subject, Bruccoli's book sorely wants artfulness. Jeffrey Hart, reviewing it in the *National Review*, suggests that Bruccoli, because he combines criticism and biography, resembles Samuel Johnson; he does so, I fear, to the extent that I resemble Magic Johnson. Bruccoli works all too quickly, is too slapdash. In mid-career he has already written and edited more than thirty books. Like that dopey joke about how do you feed a nine-hundred-pound gorilla, to which the answer is, very carefully, so to the question of how Professor Bruccoli produces so many books, the answer is, not very carefully. Which is a roundabout way of saying that *James Gould Cozzens: A Life Apart* is very far from being the exemplary work of the literary biographer's art that was needed in this case.

It was needed for two reasons. First, Cozzens was a born writer who published his first novel at the age of twenty and who, as is true of nearly all born writers, can hardly be said to have had a real life away from his desk. To be sure, he had parents, went to schools, had love affairs, married, served in the army; but his writing, and how he came to write the books he did, are the essential things. Especially are they essential in the case of Cozzens, who, as I shall attempt to show, was a writer of stark, really quite dark views. How such a writer came to see the world and its workings as he did is the crucial question. Here, alas, Professor Bruccoli stands fairly mute. Instead, for the most part, he tells us that Cozzens wrote first one novel, then another; how these books were received by critics and reviewers; and what their sales figures were. He greatly appreciates Cozzens, but can only offer respect where intellectual penetration is wanted. Possibly, as a character in *By Love Possessed* claims, "None of us, perhaps, knows any of us very well." But this is a possibility no biographer can even for a moment entertain.

The second reason an exemplary biography was required, at least if it were to succeed in helping to resuscitate Cozzens's reputation, is that Cozzens himself presents an enormous biographical problem. This is that he apparently was not a lovely man. Certainly he offers a distinct difficulty for the eulogist. Of the love of the laughter of children, of ardor for good causes, of kindness toward contemporaries, to reverse the old eulogistic pattern, James Gould Cozzens showed none. For a simple Cozzensian sentiment, allow me to quote Professor Bruccoli, who writes: "Dogs, he commented, were a satisfactory substitute for children, providing ample cause for worry without promising filial ingratitude." But such misanthropy, in Professor Bruccoli's pages, isn't understood—it is merely reported.

"I WOULD like to be able to boast that this biography is a labor of friendship," Bruccoli begins his biography. "But James Gould Cozzens claimed he had no friends. I honored him, and he endured me." His father died when he was sixteen, and the two great figures in Cozzens's life were his mother, who in a doting way was devoted to him, and his wife, Bernice Baumgarten, an important literary agent with the firm of Brandt & Brandt and the one critic whose advice he valued. Otherwise he was by and large friendless, and only small exaggeration need be found in his answer, at age thirty-nine, to a questionnaire sent him by the editors of the reference work, *Twentieth Century Authors*:

> My social preference is to be left alone, and people have always seemed willing, even eager, to gratify my inclination. I am more or less illiberal, and strongly antipathetic to all political and artistic movements. I was brought up an Episcopalian, and where I live the landed gentry are Republican. I do not understand music, I am little interested in art, and the theater seems tiresome to me. My literary preferences are for writers who take the trouble to write well. This necessarily ex-

* *James Gould Cozzens: A Life Apart*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 343 pp., $15.95.

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cludes most of my contemporaries and I think I would do well to skip the presumptuous business of listing the three or four who strike me as good. I like Shakespeare and Swift and Steele and Gibbon and Jane Austen and Hazlitt.

If Bruccoli's biography has negligible standing as a work of art, it does nonetheless provide its subject a valuable service. This is to free Cozzens from the black cloud of bigotry under which, in a reigning liberal political atmosphere, his name has fallen. In his novels, make no mistake about it, minority groups do not come in for a gentle ride. Of the Irish Catholics, for example, a judge in *By Love Possessed* remarks:

> Seventy years ago—and even thirty years ago, the number of people still around whose attitude had been formed seventy years ago was great enough to make them a majority—the term "Irish Catholic," at least to this community, meant the base and obscure vulgar. Few had anything that could be called education. Their mostly low standards of living—all they could afford—resulted in objectionable habits and manners. Politically, they were a troublesome mass vote at the disposal of their own highly purchaseable politicians. Religiously, they seemed to be the willing dupes of their priests, of a superstition to the Protestant mind corrupt and alien. . . .

In the middle of the same novel, the lawyer Julius Penrose, whose highly neurotic wife is contemplating conversion to Catholicism, launches an attack on the Church in which he sets out its attractions to the guilt-ridden and misguided. Is this Cozzens talking, ventriloqually, through his character? Difficult to say. But what can be said is that Julius Penrose's feelings about the Catholic Church are thoroughly consistent with his belief that it is part of the difficulty of being human to live with uncertainty and with many mysteries unsolved.

Another character in *By Love Possessed* refers to "typical Jewish lawyer tricks." The tricks turn out not to be tricks at all, yet, again, it is perfectly consistent that the character thinks as he does—just as it is consistent that yet another character, told of this bit of name-calling, responds: "My personal observation is that Jews behave as well as other people; and you can trust them just as far—which isn't saying much." Cozzens was too realistic a novelist not to use material of this kind, too intelligent to pretend that anti-minority feeling was not a part of the small-town New England life about which he frequently wrote, and too interesting a writer to be disqualified for his having done so. In his defense, after having read Bruccoli's biography, one can say that Cozzens had a fine impartiality, having no love for any particular group, his own included. As for the Jews, that oldest of old arguments will have to serve: his best friend, his only friend in fact, his wife, was a Jew.

As IT stands, then, readers who come to Matthew Bruccoli's biography of James Gould Cozzens are likely to depart as they arrived: either convinced of Cozzens's genius or convinced of his meanness. It could, of course, have been worse. A psychologically minded biographer would have found in the work of Cozzens meat and drink and a full trolley of sweets for dessert. For example, sex, though never abundant in his novels, almost always carries with it the pleasure of an iced drink in a blizzard; it is unfailingly a reminder of humankind's biological limitations. For this reason, sex in a Cozzens novel often comes to seem the mating of beasts —more frequently a low than a high point in the conduct of human affairs.

No novelist has the full range of literary weapons in his arsenal, and Cozzens is not an exception. Although he has wit, which is displayed in his formulations and in the merciless observations on life made by his intelligent characters, he is otherwise fairly humorless. Lyricism, similarly, is foreign to him. He has an anti-intellectual bias, and the one character in all his works against whom he takes out after unstintingly is an intellectual, a writer for little magazines, serving as a public-relations officer in the army in *Guard of Honor*. His case against intellectuals is based on their love of theory in a world where there are too many variables for any human mind or theory to take proper account of. Things, in Cozzens's novels, are as they are and must be dealt with as such—conditions and not theories interest him. Cozzens, like George Orwell, has a certain talent for facing unpleasant facts; unlike Orwell, he seems almost to relish unpleasant facts; and those unpleasant facts that give him the most pleasure are the ones that knock the pins out from under theories of human behavior.

The more impressive of Cozzens's novels fall well outside the mainstream of modernist fiction. He does not go in for wild invention. In a mature James Gould Cozzens novel a cause has effects, effects ignite further causes, which in turn light up other effects. If you happen to believe that this is how life works —as, it happens, I do—then James Gould Cozzens may be for you. If you don't, then perhaps you would do better to consider the problems of modern reading in the novels of Italo Calvino or set off on a tour of ancient Egypt with Norman Mailer.

I SPOKE of a mature James Gould Cozzens novel, for there are also less mature and even immature James Gould Cozzens novels. Among the latter are the first four novels he wrote, between the ages of twenty and twenty-eight, and of which he himself spoke slightingly. I have not read these novels, but to judge from the passages quoted in Bruccoli's biography, they richly possess the most prominent mark of the too-soon-published young novelist: lush overwriting in the service of extreme self-indulgence. Excluding these first four novels, Cozzens wrote nine others that he cared sufficiently about to want to see remain in print. If one reads them in the order in which they were written, as I have recently done, a novelistic career unfolds before one, in all its interesting missteps, backsteps, and final striding forward. It also demonstrates that James Gould Cozzens, this lonely figure with his dark views, achieved something very impressive.

One could not, I think, have

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foretold how impressive it would be from the first of these nine novels, *S.S. San Pedro* (1931). This is a slight book about a large event —the sinking of an ocean liner that ships water and eventually goes under during a furious storm. Though no great shakes, the novel —novella really, since it runs to only 85 pages in my paperback edition—is obviously the work of a serious writer. In a bit of puffery written for the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* Christopher Morley spoke of "the beautiful crispness and decision of [Cozzens's] prose." "Beautiful," I don't know; "crispness," maybe; but "decision," a word I have not seen before used to describe prose, seems to me very good. For all its shortcomings, this novel by a man in his late twenties is written with decision—a word I read to mean disciplined authority.

If *S.S. San Pedro* is thin and a bit awkward, Cozzens's next novel, *The Last Adam* (1933), like a young man coming into his maturity, is both more filled-out and more confident. The crisis at the center of *The Last Adam* is a typhoid epidemic, which may or may not have broken out because of the incompetence of the town's physician and health officer, George Bull, a country doctor filled with prejudice and strong opinion who knows that life's major datum is death:

> Discouragement, to feel death's certainty; exasperation, to know the fatuousness of resisting such an adversary—what was the use of temporary evasions or difficult little remedies when death simply came back and came back until it won?—moved him more than any personal dread of extinction, or compassion for those stricken. The stricken, beyond help, were beyond needing help. During the last forty years, fully a hundred human beings had actually died while he watched. He couldn't recall one who gave signs of minding much; they were too sick or too badly hurt to care. If they were conscious enough to know that they were alive, pain blurred their view; they saw no good anywhere. They were not given peace to regret a lost future; they were beyond desiring anything. In its melancholy way, the flesh, maligned mortality, took tender care of its own.

But before setting up the central crisis in the novel, Cozzens provides a portrait of the town of New Winton in the full range of its social classes, its local politics, its pretensions. This supposed novelist of power and privilege is very hard on the Bannings, one of the town's upper-crust families; and easily the most admirable character in the book is a telephone operator named May Tupping, whose husband has been paralyzed by a hunting accident and who herself faces life with stoical acceptance. The crisis of the novel is resolved not because right is on Dr. Bull's side—we never learn whether it is or isn't—but because Henry Harris, the town's political power, sees the resolution of the issue in Dr. Bull's favor as a useful way of infuriating Mrs. Banning, which it gives him pleasure to do. The novel closes on a note of somewhat forced affirmation, a paean to the vitality and survival powers of Dr. Bull by a woman who has been sleeping with him for years and whose closing words of half-grudging admiration are: "The old bastard!"

Written by a man of thirty, this is a work of considerable artistic coolness: objective, neatly distanced, socially perspicacious. If a comparison is wanted, I should say that *The Last Adam* is Sinclair Lewis without the malice. Because the malice—"See what swine these small-town people are!"—is missing, *The Last Adam* can still be read today with genuine interest, while the novels of Sinclair Lewis can only be read for historical interest.

Castaway (1934), Cozzens's next novel, is intended as a modern *Robinson Crusoe*. Instead of stranding his chief character on an island, Cozzens places "Mr. Lecky"—he is never referred to otherwise—in a deserted modern department store. We are never told how he got in, or why the store is deserted. What we are presented with is Mr. Lecky's paranoia and his painfully inept attempts at survival. He builds a fort composed of furniture in front of the men's room, he equips himself with rifles and ammunition from the sporting-goods department, he dresses himself from men's ready-to-wear, he eats canned hams, biscuits, and preserves from the food department. A false man Friday shows up, whom Mr. Lecky kills with savage incompetence at close range with a shotgun.

The descriptions are powerful in their precision, but what is *Castaway* about? Is it an allegory of man's essential loneliness? Is it about man's technological ineptitude? His unfitness for the modern world? I don't think we can quite know, for the allegory is not clearly realized. Yet the critics were generally pleased, citing *Castaway* as very Kafkaesque, which ticked off Cozzens who hadn't ever read Kafka. Nearly twenty-five years later, Irving Howe, speaking for the modernist lobby in American criticism, wrote an attack on Cozzens in which he nonetheless had kind words for *Castaway*, going on to regret that after it Cozzens "becomes a quite conventional novelist, either uninterested in or unable to use the 20th-century advances in technique." (Interestingly, *Castaway* was perhaps alone among Cozzens's novels to be taught in American universities. The reason for this is not far to seek. All those obscurities, all those unresolved difficulties —such things fill classroom hours.)

In fact, Cozzens did return to "conventional" literary techniques in his next novel, *Men and Brethren* (1936), which is about a crowded day and a half in the life of an Episcopal priest. Ernest Cudlipp, who is vicar of a Manhattan church, is a no-nonsense Christian for whom the niceties of doctrine are of no great interest: "You either have the capacity to apprehend the great spiritual truths, which are universal and invariable, or you haven't." Ernie Cudlipp is less a saver than a patcher of souls. He arranges an abortion for a parishioner who has become pregnant in an adulterous affair; he attempts to soothe a fellow priest defrocked for making homosexual advances to the young; he permits a death-bed conversion to Catholicism of a woman dying of cancer. He is a man over whose eyes no wool can be pulled. He knows about human depravity, about the worm of human malice, and about just how far sweet reason, noble disinterestedness, and the assumption of good will can

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take one in defeating either. Yet he also knows that "sometimes people will be amazingly kind, amazingly generous, if they possibly can." He tells a friend, a woman who is without religion, "Suppose I were to say that it isn't especially desirable for you to be happy—in the sense of having things suit you, instead of spending your life trying to arrange things to suit someone else."

Certain qualities that will mark Cozzens's major fiction begin to emerge in *Men and Brethren*. The respect for work, for one: of the defrocked priest, cut off from his profession, Ernie Cudlipp thinks, "He had nothing left, he stood for nothing, he was nothing." For another, there is the preference for dealing with day-to-day reality—"Realists," Cudlipp thinks, "are the only people who get things done"—over the penchant for the theoretical. The observations in this novel are very sharp. "As far as Ernest could judge, the really valuable thing which Doctor [Karl] Barth did seem to offer was a conception of religious truth which allowed modern-minded young priests like Wilber to recover that sustaining, snobbish ease of mental superiority, loved long since, but, fifty or sixty years ago, lost to the clergy for a while." If the novel has a flaw, it is its lack of density. Things happen too fast; more—in the way of detail, of accounts of motivation, of completion of character—is wanted. Yet in the career of James Gould Cozzens *Men and Brethren* marks a true step forward.

One step forward—one step back. *Ask Me Tomorrow* (1940) is Cozzens's one attempt at an autobiographical novel, and it is a sad botch. It is based on a season in Europe in which Cozzens served as the tutor for the son of a rich American family. The Cozzens character, Francis Ellery, is an unpleasant young man filled with himself, and of no great interest to anyone else, who becomes entangled in his own youthful thoughts: "Recoiling in disgust from human beings, you had to recoil, in another disgust, from your own recoiling. . . ." In his attack on Cozzens, Irving Howe noted: "He is not much concerned with the idea of the self, and he certainly does not share the exalted valuation most modern novelists place upon its inviolability." This is true enough, and yet one wonders if Cozzens wasn't correct to turn away from the modern novelists' preoccupation with the self. By now, of course, our novelists have given us a bellyful of the self. One thinks here of all those Mailer, Styron, Roth, and Bellow novels in which the hero, modestly disguised and made to seem on the whole winning, is so obviously Mailer, Styron, Roth, or Bellow. One wonders, indeed, if the time hasn't come to shelve the self. After *Ask Me Tomorrow* Cozzens did, and never returned to it.

With *The Just and The Unjust* (1942), Cozzens entered onto his major phase. This novel, whose time span is a week, centers around a murder trial in Childerstown, the seat of a New England county. Its principal character is Abner Coates, a man six years out of Harvard Law School, an assistant district attorney, and the son and grandson of county judges. Its method is one Cozzens will use in his next two novels: an event takes place in a limited time frame, but the book regularly weaves back into the past through flashback, amply mixing action and observation. A portrait is provided of a town and its institutions, in their full social and professional texture. In this instance the trial of two men for murdering a drug dealer is the event, but the underlying question is what Abner Coates will do with his life. It is an interesting question chiefly because in Abner Coates Cozzens has created an interesting young man.

Abner Coates may not know what to do with his life, but he does reasonably well know himself. He knows, for example, that he doesn't have a first-rate legal mind, having been taught this lesson in law school by a classmate who showed him what a top-quality legal mind really is: "What he did not know, what Paul Bonbright, among others, showed him, was that those abilities of his that got him, without distinction but also without much exertion, through all previous lessons and examinations, were not first-rate abilities handicapped by laziness, but second-rate, by no degree of effort or assiduity to be made the equal of abilities like Bonbright's."

The question of what to do with his life presses upon Abner Coates when, during the week of the murder trial, he is offered a place on the county ballot for district attorney by the local political boss. He wants the job, even needs it, since he plans to marry and will require additional income, yet the political boss is a man he instinctively dislikes and to whom he is extremely wary of becoming beholden. Now in the truly conventional American novel we know how this problem would be resolved. Our hero would, after much agonizing, retain what he thinks of as his integrity, turn down the offer, and perhaps go into legal-aid work where he will uphold the rights of the downtrodden. Not, however, in Cozzens.

The trial grinds on. A very strong sense emerges of how the law in its daily operations works which I, for one, find fascinating. Irving Howe, for another, finds this same quality, as reflected in *By Love Possessed*, tiresome and all too American. ("The American respect for technology becomes in Cozzens an unconcealed admiration for the man who uses his mind for precise utilitarian ends and who is impatient with other ideas about the value of thought." Whose thought? That of literary critics, no doubt.) Throughout the book flows a stream of observations that, whether one agrees with them or not, are of a kind that need to be confronted. Abner, for example, thinks: "Criminals might be victims of circumstances in the sense that few of them ever had a fair chance; but it was a mistake to forget that the only 'fair chance' they ever wanted was a chance for easy money." Or, as the current district attorney remarks to Abner: "Theory is where you want to go; practice is how you're going to get there."

In the end the murderers, who are guilty, get off with a sentence of second-degree murder, having been shown misplaced mercy by a jury that failed to ur derstand the requirements of the law. This,

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though, is how it goes; justice is no exact science. Abner accepts the place on the ballot to run for district attorney. ("Resist this horrid nonsense," says Father Cudlipp in *Men and Brethren*, "about being true to yourself.") He will worry about his personal integrity when the occasion arises. Meanwhile, he will get on with a job of serious work. As his father, now half-paralyzed after a stroke and on the rim of death, tells Abner in the novel's closing passage:

> ". . . In the present, every day is a miracle. The world gets up in the morning and is fed and goes to work, and in the evening it comes home and is fed again and perhaps has a little amusement and goes to sleep. To make that possible, so much has to be done by so many people that, on the face of it, it is impossible. Well, every day we do it; and every day, come hell, come high water, we're going to have to go on doing it as well as we can."
>
> "So it seems," said Abner.
>
> "Yes, so it seems," said Judge Coates, "and so it is, and so it will be! And that's where you come in. That's all we want of you."
>
> Abner said, "What do you want of me?"
>
> "We just want you to do the impossible," Judge Coates said.

Somewhere between *Ask Me Tomorrow* and *The Just and The Unjust*, Cozzens's work, it seems to me, acquired that quality essential to the best novelists yet perhaps not finally altogether to be understood. The quality I have in mind is gravity. Gravity is not a question to which contemporary literary criticism often addresses itself. Among living writers, I would say Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has it; so, when they are writing well, do V.S. Naipaul and Saul Bellow and I.B. Singer. John Updike and Gabriel García Márquez do not, and Norman Mailer never will. Gravity derives from a serious literary mind, unencumbered by the clichés of the day, at work on serious matters.

Guard of Honor (1948), the novel for which Cozzens won the Pulitzer Prize, has gravity in just this sense. It takes place during three days on an Army Air Force base in Florida during World War II. It is about what nowadays would be called "crisis management." One crisis occurs in the novel over segregation on the base, as does another crisis connected with civilian relations, and a final crisis has to do with the drowning of paratroopers during a field exercise owing to incompetence. This is a novel with a cast of roughly fifty important characters. A work of more than six-hundred pages, it has a plot too intricate to summarize. Suffice it to say that the book gives us a most convincing portrayal of the way a large institution is run, filled with detailed knowledge about a vast range of military jobs and human types.

Much of the action in *Guard of Honor* takes place among field- and general-grade officers. Now a bird colonel or a major general, especially if he is a regular army officer, is, as every college graduate knows, a fascist. Cozzens, who wasn't a college graduate, apparently came away from his time in the army without knowing this. Even though he much disliked being in the army, what he did come away with was reinforcement of his view that, as Colonel Ross, the novel's main intelligence, puts it: "A man must stand up and do the best he can with what there is." Men who know their job and do it are the men Cozzens admires.

There is also a running gunfire against intellectuals in *Guard of Honor*. "Few ideas," one character reflects, "could be abstract enough to be unqualified by the company they kept." Another says: "If there are differences of opinion, I think most of them are differences that always arise between those who have to deal with fact, and those who are free to deal with theories." And, finally, another character, a magazine editor in civilian life, though no great lover of the military and its ways, feels himself

> . . . obliged to admire a simple, unlimited integrity that accepted as the law of nature such elevated concepts as the Military Academy's Duty-Honor-Country, convinced that those were the only solid goods; that everyone knew what the words meant.
>
> They needed no gloss—indeed it probably never crossed General Beal's mind that they could be glossed, that books had been written to show that Country was a delusive projection of the individual's ego; and that there were men who considered it a part of intelligence to admit that Honor was a hypocritical social sanction protecting the position of a ruling class; or that Duty was self-interest as it appeared when sanctions like Honor had fantastically distorted it. In his simplicity, General Beal, apprised of such intellectual views, would probably retort by begging the question; what the hell kind of person thought things like that?

BUT the intellectuals finally got their own back at Cozzens when he published *By Love Possessed* (1957). I do not mean to imply a vendetta—intellectuals waiting in hallways for nine years. It was merely that almost everything Cozzens's work stood for went against the grain of the ideal type of the intellectual. As an example of that ideal type made flesh, one can hardly do better than the late Dwight Macdonald—a man with a perfectly matched set of radical-intellectual political and literary opinions and a devastating wit into the bargain—and perhaps now is the time to look at his roundhouse attack on *By Love Possessed*.

First, however, a bit of background must be supplied. Even though Cozzens had won a Pulitzer Prize, no earlier novel of his had scored a true success, either commercial or critical. With *By Love Possessed*, he had hit the bestseller gong, and hit it with a sledgehammer. The novel was weeks and weeks atop the bestseller list, a movie sale and a *Reader's Digest* condensation had been made, a *Time* cover story done, and critics both provincial and metropolitan had lined up to praise the novel. In other words, Cozzens was ready to be savaged.

Here it must be said that *By Love Possessed* is not Cozzens's best performance. It is an extremely ambitious novel, and too much of the ambition goes into its style. The novel attempts to be a comprehensive account of the various permutations of love—from adolescent lust to the complexities of marital

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love to the love of parents for their children to the pure love of a sister for her brother—and how in these various forms love wreaks havoc on any plans to get through life with order and reason as one's guiding principles. Dealing with a universal theme, Cozzens thought to forge a universal style. In the attempt to bring this off, he often twisted his syntax, worked in quotations from great authors, and trotted out a Latinized vocabulary of often arcane words.

The effect is all too frequently an air of pomposity and portentousness. To what extent this ruins the novel—it certainly doesn't improve it—is another question. The late Alexander Gerschenkron, an economic historian who also adjudicated the dispute between Edmund Wilson and Vladimir Nabokov over translating Pushkin, once told me that, in Russian, many of Dostoevsky's novels are so wretchedly written as to be very nearly unreadable. Gerschenkron did not go on to say that he failed to read them. But if your sensibilities are so fine that stylistic lapses put you irretrievably off, then many a passage in *By Love Possessed* will seem to you like downing a Pepsi with a meal at Lutèce. And yet the concern with style can, it seems to me, be carried too far. Dwight Macdonald was fond of quoting Buffon's old maxim, "The style is the message," but Macdonald's message, as near as I can make it out, came to no more than that it is better to have a nice style.

THERE is no want of style in Dwight Macdonald's attack on *By Love Possessed*. Still, it seems to me one of those essays in which one's pleasure will be destroyed if one actually reads the author being discussed. Macdonald begins by mentioning the enormousness—to him, the enormity—of the success of Cozzens's novel. He then cites examples of the praise the book has received, finding quotations that go especially gushy. They were even, it turns out, nuts about it in the provinces. If you know the intellectual signals, by now you ought to know that there is already a great deal to be suspicious about.

But when Macdonald comes to speak of the novel itself, something rather odd happens. If one has read it oneself, one begins to realize that Macdonald either did not read it very carefully or that he came to it blinded if not by malice then by the passion for polemic. He informs us that Arthur Winner, Jr., the novel's principal character, is a prig—and, worse, that Cozzens doesn't know he is a prig, which is the greatest sign of ineptitude in a novelist. But Macdonald is quite mistaken here. Arthur Winner, Jr. is indeed a prig but a prig by intention. It is the whole point of Cozzens's novel to show that Arthur Winner, try as he may, cannot live his life in the kind of order that a morally priggish man would wish. Through the action of the novel Arthur Winner is reminded of one of his sons, now dead, who was a kind of bad seed, whom no amount of teaching, no amount of punishment, could straighten out. Later in the novel he is made to realize that an adulterous affair he had with the wife of a friend was known about all along to this friend—and in this there is further humiliation, further destruction of priggishness.

Macdonald goes on to say that Cozzens's "characters often speak brutally, for example, not because they are supposed to be brutes, but because their creator apparently thinks this is the way men talk." He then cites two samples, one from an aging lawyer named Noah Tuttle and another from a physician named Reggie Shaw. The samples are brutal, true, but what Macdonald doesn't tell his readers is that the lawyer is on the edge of senility and the physician, having seen so much that is horrendous in life, has lapsed into alcoholism. "No reason is given for any of these onslaughts," Macdonald writes, "aside from the fact that all three recipients are women; this seems to be Cozzens's idea of manly straight-from-the-shoulder talk. Curious." It is curious, all right. It makes one wonder: was Dwight Macdonald asleep at the wheel, or instead concentrating on running someone over?

After scoring blows against Cozzens for anti-Semitism, anti-Negro sentiment (there are, in the current phrase, Tomish characters in the novel), and anti-feminism, Macdonald finds two reasons that account for the success of the novel. It succeeded with the critics because there was "a general feeling that Cozzens had hitherto been neglected and that he 'had it coming to him,' " to which there is perhaps some truth. And it succeeded with the public because "it is the latest episode in The Middlebrow Counter-Revolution." Middlebrow—Macdonald's vocabulary knew no more dampening phrase than this one. The way Macdonald saw it was that Cozzens's work was part of "The Novel of Resignation." He was resigned to taking life as it was; he was hopelessly given to "maturity." There was no idealism in Cozzens, no radical thrust to argue with and change life. In this he had caught the spirit of the age. Similarly, Irving Howe, while conceding that Cozzens had been consistent in his vision over the years, noted that "It is the weary *Zeitgeist* that has finally limped round to him." And, more explicitly political than Macdonald in his attack, Howe concluded: "And, indeed, a civilization that finds its symbolic embodiment in Dwight David Eisenhower and its practical guide in John Foster Dulles has been well prepared for receiving the fruits of the Philosophy of Limit. It is a civilization that, in its naked and graceless undelusion, deserves as its laureate James Gould Cozzens—Novelist of the Republic."

Now here is an interesting piece of damnation. Cozzens has created a novel—indeed a body of work—that requires attack because it fits in with the spirit of the age, which is perceived to be loathsome. On these same grounds it makes a certain amount of sense to knock off *War and Peace* until we have world disarmament and pack away *Moby Dick* until we have finally managed to save the whale.

Macdonald and Howe may have disliked Cozzens's style but what they really hated was what they took to be his message—or, to use the grander term, his vision. They read him as a novelist in support of the status quo, surely no good thing to be. He reminded readers of human limitation when what Americans

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needed to be reminded of was human possibility. His novels, with their insistence on the role played in life by illness, bad luck, poor character, biological urgings, death, were, when you got right down to it, not only anti-liberal but in the profoundest sense counterrevolutionary. In these purely political terms, Macdonald and Howe were probably right.

BUT I do not want to make *By Love Possessed* sound all message, all vision. In fact, if cumbersome in style, it is nonetheless a most carefully constructed work of fiction. (Even Howe allowed that Cozzens was a "craftsman.") The concatenation of character and event is persuasively worked out with an intricacy and fine discrimination that could only have been achieved by a high literary intelligence. Cozzens realizes his vision not through preaching but through plot. This vision is compelling because he has taken great pains to get his facts straight, because he makes his characters complex yet clear, and describes experience wih a richness and unpredictability that show a minute fidelity to life. As Arthur Winner, Jr.'s law partner says in *By Love Possessed,* "Happiness, Jonathan Swift admonishes me, is a perpetual possession of being well-deceived." The burden of Cozzens's major fiction is to undeceive us.

If Cozzens resembles any major American figure, it is Justice Holmes. Like Holmes, Cozzens did not wish to blink unpleasant facts about human nature. Like Holmes, Cozzens admired the strength of the puritanical tradition while remaining himself agnostic. Like Holmes again, Cozzens felt that all lies, even lies for the putative good of humanity, were still lies. In the middle of *By Love Possessed,* a black man comes to Arthur Winner, Jr., to tell him he has a bad heart condition and would like Winner to write his will for him. When Winner asks how he is feeling at present, he says he is rather like the man in the cartoon who has fallen from the skyscraper and who, when passing a window from which people look out at him in shock, announces, "All right so far." There is a joke Justice Holmes would have adored. He would also have had no difficulty understanding another character in *By Love Possessed* who says that "Freedom is the knowledge of necessity."

IN HIS biography Professor Bruccoli writes: "In the eyes of the Left Cozzens was the spokesman for the enemy. Indeed, he was the enemy." There can be little question that Macdonald's essay, backed up by that of Howe, brought down Cozzens's reputation—and brought it down hard. The hyenas having done their work, the maggots now crept in. The signal had gone out; it was now understood to be OK to have at James Gould Cozzens. And have at Cozzens's next two books, a collection of stories entitled *Children and Others* and a thin novel of his late years called *Morning Noon and Night,* everyone did. He was now known as the novelist with bad style and bad politics. He was the spokesman for the ruling class, the novelist of power and privilege. Clichés, like bad news, travel fast.

When a young critic to whom Cozzens had been friendly warned Cozzens that he had just written an attack on his social conservatism in the New York *Times Book Review,* Cozzens responded that he intended no social or political message in his fiction:

> My only aim and interest is to try to present as exactly as I can people and events as they appear to me. When young, I admit that I imagined such painstaking dispassion, and concern for simple truth, could displease nobody. Of course I know now that, to all who have things to sell or the emotional need to write for or against things, such an attitude's simply infuriating.

It was the wrong age, Cozzens came to learn, for writing about things as one saw them.

AS RECOUNTED in Matthew Bruccoli's pages, James Gould Cozzens's last years were wretchedly sad. His wife died before he did; he stopped writing, he even stopped reading ("no longer writing," he noted, in a comment only a writer would understand, "Why read?"). Cancer of the spine claimed him ten days before he was seventy-five. Before he died he wrote to his publisher, William Jovanovich, "In clear fact work of mine's all out of season." He was right. The anthology of his writing and critical appreciations that Professor Bruccoli put together in 1978 sold a total of 2,488 copies in cloth and paper. No serious reevaluation of Cozzens's work, which this book was intended to stir, ever came about.

In a more just world, James Gould Cozzens would be accorded a volume in the Library of America, the recently established series of American classics for a general audience. It would include his novels *The Just and the Unjust, Guard of Honor,* and, yes, *By Love Possessed.* But although two volumes have already been published of the work of Jack London, and others are no doubt in preparation for Sinclair Lewis and (the early) John Dos Passos, I doubt very much if the present editors and their advisers plan to include Cozzens. The injustice here is, or ought to be, obvious. Yet I suspect Cozzens would not be much surprised; about injustice, in literary criticism and in much else besides, he knew a very great deal.

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"Getting" Kissinger

THE PRICE OF POWER: KISSINGER IN THE NIXON WHITE HOUSE. By SEYMOUR M. HERSH. *Summit. 698 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL LEDEEN

THIS very long book is the latest sally in the war of a certain segment of the journalistic elite against the Nixon administration. Not content with having won a large battle that ended in the liquidation of that administration, lacking the ability to analyze and understand the policy issues, viewing the world through lenses dimmed by ideology and narrowed by ignorance, some among the Washington press corps are still searching out survivors upon whom to concentrate their personal attack. The major figure among such survivors is of course Henry Kissinger, and the effort to destroy him is the immediate purpose of Seymour Hersh's 698 interminable pages.

To those very few people who will ever actually read *The Price of Power* (though many are buying it), the title should stand as an ironic commentary on the effects of megalomania on Washington journalists. For Hersh (who won a Pultizer Prize for his reportage on the My Lai massacre in Vietnam) is suffering under the delusion that in this book he has written a major work of history. He has not; anyone trying to understand American foreign policy in the period of the Nixon Presidency (the book covers the years 1968-73) is advised to look elsewhere. Hersh has produced nearly 700 pages of gossip, gathered and repeated without standards of evidence, thrown together without suitable context, and wrapped in judgmental language that insults the intelligence of the reader. The book is useful only for the light it throws on a "school" of journalism, the self-proclaimed investigative reporters, and on the view of the world held by an influential segment among them.

We have here, then, a compendium of all the nasty comments, snide remarks, unflattering recollections, and bitter self-justifications directed against Kissinger (and Nixon) that Hersh has managed to sweep up, mostly from individuals who lost out in policy or power struggles, some from sworn enemies of the United States. A number of these items may be true; many are demonstrably false. But all of them receive the same uncritical treatment. For Hersh, the truth is secondary to the main task—to "get Kissinger," as he often put it to interviewers during his research. For these purposes he mainly attacks from the Left (e.g., accusing Kissinger of planning the overthrow of the Allende regime in Chile), but he is even willing where convenient to attack from the Right (claiming that Kissinger was not sufficiently tough with the Russians on the terms of SALT I).

Throughout, the unending refrain is that Kissinger (together with Nixon) based every foreign-policy decision primarily on domestic considerations, and in his actions was motivated entirely and exclusively by personal ambition and egotism. In this way he (no less than Nixon) mirrored the sins of the United States itself, a country fueled by greed (the multinationals) and imperial ambition (Vietnam and Chile). And just as the testimony of Kissinger's personal enemies is recorded uncritically and given the benefit of every doubt, so America's enemies, from Moscow to Santiago, are seen here as acting nobly and always seeking peace (while being frustrated, betrayed, and defrauded at every turn by the Americans). In his effort to "get" Kissinger, Hersh is out for even bigger game: through Kissinger, he is out to "get" America itself.

IN HIS obsessive pursuit of anything damaging to Kissinger, Hersh makes some remarkable claims. For example, Kissinger is held responsible for the Yom Kippur war, on the grounds that he sabotaged the 1969 Rogers plan for an imposed solution of the Middle East conflict. In the course of this "analysis," Hersh writes revealingly that "Nixon and Kissinger could, so it seemed, be counted upon to try to stop the Russians no matter what the merits of the issues were." The "merits" in this case, it is perhaps worth noting, were the introduction of advanced Soviet weapons into Egypt.

But then Hersh has in general adopted the anti-Israel world view, complete with dark whispers about the Israel lobby in Washington: "A Foreign Service officer, if he reports critically on Israeli policy in State Department cables, runs a risk of being labeled anti-Semitic. . . . The effect of these limitations has . . . been severe self-censorship by American officials, in the field and at home, in dealing with Israel. . . ." In Hersh's eyes, Kissinger's rage with State Department officials who supported Nasser's claims (for Israel's territory!) was unprofessional, and part of a generalized campaign against the "dedicated" State Department Arabists who "have invariably been written off by Israel and its supporters as pro-Arab and anti-Israel." In short, Kissinger was himself part of the Jewish lobby—an idea that has not previously occurred to anyone involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Then there is Vietnam. Here Hersh, for all his vaunted original research, makes a great point of the "secret" bombing of Cambodia—a tale told some years ago by William Shawcross in *Sideshow* and firmly and convincingly refuted by former Kissinger aide Peter Rodman. But it would be churlish to deny that Hersh has done a great deal of original research on other aspects of the Vietnam war, or that he has had access to some spectacularly well-informed sources on the subject. Indeed, he has spoken to the North Vietnamese themselves, and evidently found them so reliable that he has embraced their view of the war.

Thus every statement from Hanoi

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Read these statements and you'll understand why Israel is so important to the Jews.

1945

"The Jews are lower than animals."—*General George S. Patton referring to the survivors of the Holocaust*

1945

"We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them."—*Report to President Truman*

1946

"If only Hitler had finished the Final Solution."—*Polish reaction to returning Holocaust survivors*

1946

"The Americans are so enthusiastic about opening Palestine to the refugees because they do not want to have many of them in New York."—*British Foreign Minister Bevin*

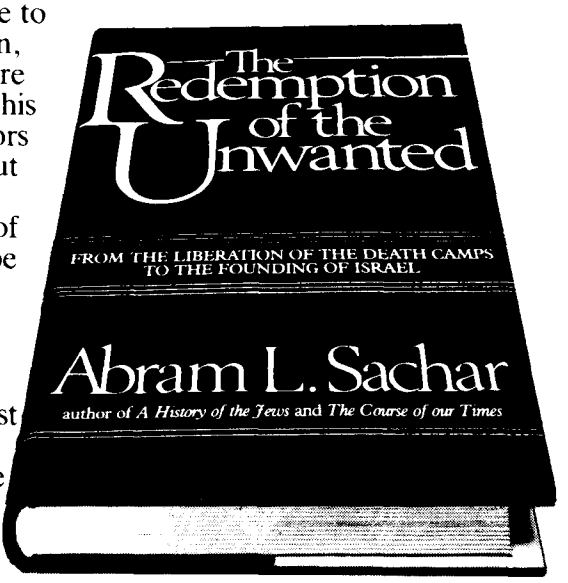
1948

"We will punish the Jews in a way the race dislikes by striking at their pockets."—*Sir Evelyn Barker, British Commander in Palestine on the eve of Israel's Independence*

These shocking statements give you some idea of the attitudes faced by the 400,000 survivors of the Holocaust. Sadly, liberation did not mean freedom. Instead, as Abram Sachar, one of this country's most distinguished historians shows, many of the survivors found themselves engaged in a new struggle—a struggle for dignity, an end to persecution, a homeland of their own. They had few resources, fewer friends, no place to go. They faced intense opposition from the British, who controlled Palestine, and from the Arabs, who bitterly fought the idea of a Jewish homeland.

Drawn from hitherto secret documents placed in the custody of the author by David K. Niles, a close aide to both Roosevelt and Truman, and scores of interviews here and in Europe and Israel, this book is about those survivors and their dreams. It is about organizations like *B'Richa* that rescued the homeless of Eastern and Central Europe through an underground network headquartered in Palestine; it is about a phantom army created to spirit thousands of Jews past a British Navy determined to block immigration to the promised land. It reveals fully the role of Niles in President Truman's support of Israel. And it shows the indifference of those who stood by while "Displaced Persons" from Hitler's death camps were held under guard against their will.

The Redemption of the Unwanted re-creates the heroic story of those who survived the Holocaust with a rare combination of sensitivity, historical accuracy, and a master historian's gift for fine writing.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FROM THE LIBERATION OF THE DEATH CAMPS TO THE FOUNDING OF ISRAEL
Abram L. Sachar
author of A History of the Jews and The Course of our Times

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is taken at face value by Hersh, and repeated without critical comment, including most astonishingly the claim that "There was no bloodbath in the South after Hanoi's victory in 1975. . . ."

This assertion, made in the teeth of waves of "boat people" and other well-documented horrors, is of a piece with a series of articles Hersh wrote from Vietnam in the summer of 1979. In that series, which appeared in the New York *Times*, the economic plight of the country was blamed on the ethnic Chinese, who were leaving Vietnam for China; political repression was explained away by reference to the need to control black markets; and words like "brutal" were reserved for characterizing past American actions. Hersh did manage to find one person who had not "had . . . an easy time with reeducation programs." This poor soul, Dr. Nguyen Hung Tin, formerly a colonel in the Saigon army, had spent two-and-a-half years in the "reeducation camps." But, in Hersh's words, "If he was bitter about the experience, the forty-seven-year old doctor did not show it during a 90-minute interview in Ho Chi Minh City. . . . 'For myself,' he said, 'it was a pleasure, especially the manual labor.' "

WHAT was going on here? How is it that, at a time when the whole world was aghast at the viciousness of the Vietnamese regime, an intrepid investigative reporter could manage to uncover no serious wrongdoing? If Hersh himself were examining such a case, he would in all probability conclude that the reporter had traded benign coverage for new "dirt" on another subject of his investigations. But whether or not Hersh made such a deal with Hanoi in exchange for new "dirt" on Kissinger, we know that he made a similar deal in at least one other case.

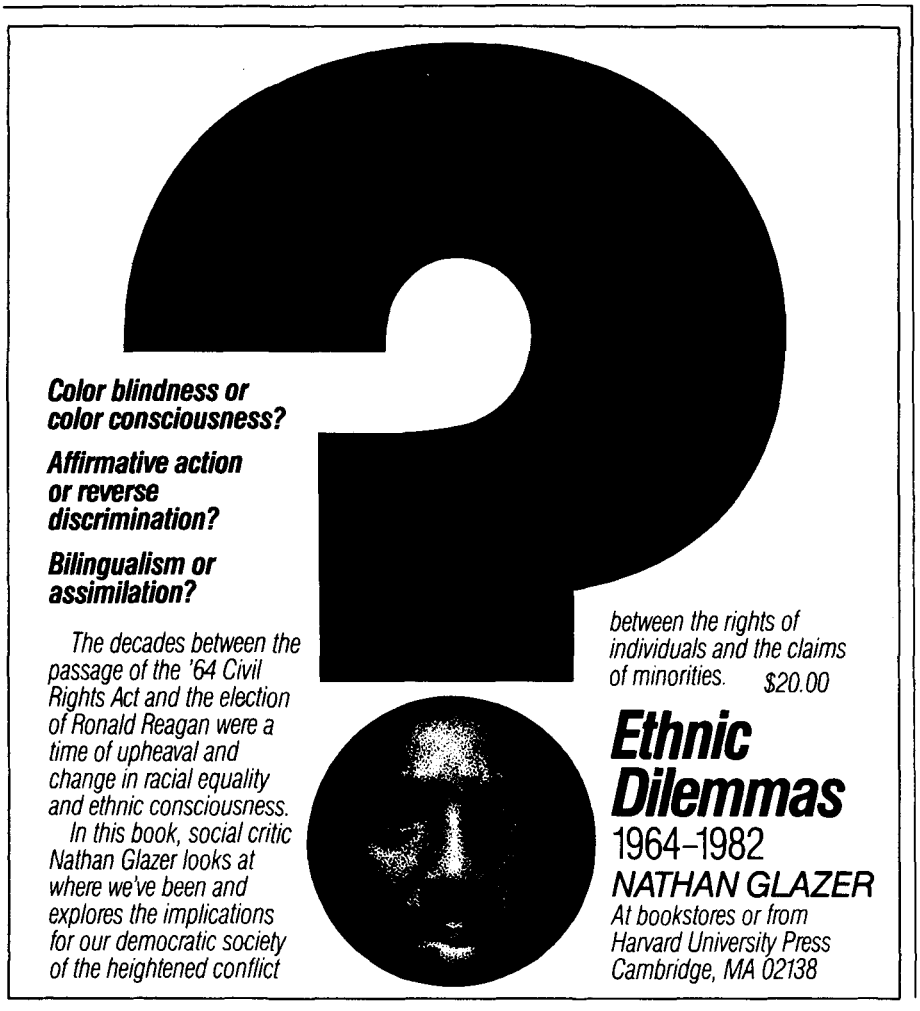
Thus, seeking for evidence that Kissinger was deeply involved in an American conspiracy that led, in the end, to the murder of Allende and the overthrow of his Marxist-Leninist regime in Chile—a claim disputed by Kissinger and every other major American government official of the period—Hersh offered a deal to a key source, Edward Korry, former American Ambassador to Chile. Korry is an embittered man, and his is not the calmest voice in the current discussion, but this in no way impeaches what he wrote in December of last year to former Attorney General Edward Levi:

> From 1974 to 1977, Hersh accumulated from me, in the name of the *Times*, a huge store of essential facts and documentation about Chile and my role. This material negated the allegations not only of my supposed perjury and involvement in CIA coup plottings [both of which Hersh was alleging in print], but of much else about the U.S. government's and my actions, my character, and my beliefs. Hersh suppressed the rescuing facts to punish me, as he said then, for not helping him to "get" Kissinger. . . .

When, however, Hersh discovered that he needed Korry's cooperation in order to write his book, he now offered to publish the "rescuing facts" he had previously suppressed. Korry decided to play along, this time after a written guarantee, and Hersh delivered, in his own way. On February 9, 1981, the readers of the New York *Times* discovered a most peculiar story on the front page: "Evidence has come to light suggesting that Mr. Korry, despite his strong opposition to the Allende candidacy, was frozen out of the planning for a proposed military coup and warned the White House. . . ." So Hersh "absolved" Korry of blame, after five years of disgrace and torment.

Nevertheless he continued to distort the facts about Chile, as Korry notes in his letter to Levi:

> . . . by artful manipulation of material I had provided, by invention, by distortion of my statements, and by a total recasting of my life record (not to say that of the U.S. and the Allende governments') he pours out the long-bottled truths . . . to falsify what actually occurred in Chile and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in Washington....[He] now uses . . . my information . . . to buttress the myths he was the first to plant and to propagate about the U.S.-in-Chile:—that the U.S. was responsible for the failure of the Allende regime, that U.S. hatred of Allende was so strong that we behaved inflexibly and dogmatically, that it was the U.S. [that] . . . overthrew Allende.

As Korry goes on to point out, it is very important that the world at large recognize the truth, not only because Hersh's myths help spawn terrorism and anti-Americanism, but because without understanding Chile one cannot understand the problems the United States now faces in Central America. The historical truth is that "the U.S. made an all-out effort to reach a generous and fair agreement with a 'Marxist' regime in Chile in 1970-71"; Korry insists that Kissinger was fully supportive of this effort. Allende was not interested. The same can be said of American efforts to reach an agreement with Nicaragua in 1981-82, when we were similarly rebuffed.

WHATEVER judgment one may pass in the end on the Kissinger period, it is, or should be, obvious that Hersh is too consumed with hatred to be of any help in assessing the record. But it is also important to recognize that it is not simply hatred of one or two men that drives Hersh. His aim is, to quote Korry again, "the capture of history." In all the international events Hersh describes, it is the United States that foils efforts at peace, and bears the responsibility for war. Communist Vietnam is not criticized; Allende is called a moderate social democrat; the United States is always the aggressor.

These are recognizable themes. They are elements in the great campaign by which so many American journalists and other intellectuals have attempted to transform our sworn enemies into misunderstood innocents, and to portray our own leaders as the foes of freedom and democracy. Hersh's latest contribution to this campaign is among the most dishonest, and the most disreputable.

Israélites & Juifs

JEWISH IDENTITIES IN FRANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY FRENCH JEWRY. By DOMINIQUE SCHNAPPER. Foreword by EDWARD SHILS. Translated by ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER. *University of Chicago Press. 181 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by ROGER KAPLAN

THE French Jewish community is now the largest in free Europe, the fourth largest in the world. Decimated by persecution during World War II, it was still in a convalescent state when the arrival of the North African communities (in particular from Algeria) swelled its ranks in the early 1960's. The Jews from Algeria have done well in France, better on the whole than those from Morocco, who when they emigrated tended to be much poorer. As their children have grown up and started families, the two communities have changed not only the demographics of French Jewry but its character as well, somewhat the way North African (and more generally Sephardi) Jews have changed Israeli society. From a French perspective, however, the important point about this new emigration is that the North African Jews are not by and large interested in assimilation. In this they differ sharply from their European brethren, at least up until World War II.

In regard to assimilation, the "old" French Jewry has been likened to German Jewry. Both communities were profoundly nationalistic, both were educated, highly motivated, and generally successful. But a more interesting comparison might be made with American Jews. When the Reform movement explicitly rejected the notion of Jewish nationhood, as it did for about fifty years from the 1880's on, it was expressing a faith in America (as well as a theological point of view)

ROGER KAPLAN *writes frequently about French politics and culture.*

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that was close to the kind of attachment French Jews felt to France. France and the United States were, in the eyes of their respective Jewish patriots, the closest anyone had yet come to the historical realization of the good society.

In a sense they were right. Both France and the United States, in the 18th and 19th centuries, developed political traditions that seemed to encourage the flowering of civic virtues and civil philosophies (especially tolerance and the rule of law) that would allow Jewish life in the Diaspora to be, at last, without constraint. In this context, it was quite natural for the ideal of assimilation to gain ground in the Jewish community, and for the idea of Jewish nationhood to lose significance. Judaism would be a religion and nothing more.

These ideas were stronger in France than the United States. Despite Tocqueville's prediction that there would be a general lessening of cultural diversity in American society, the United States has actually fostered more rather than less diversity in the years since he made his observation. Thanks in part to those private voluntary associations that Tocqueville found so interesting and valuable a part of American society, national religious and ethnic groups have been able to preserve their identities.

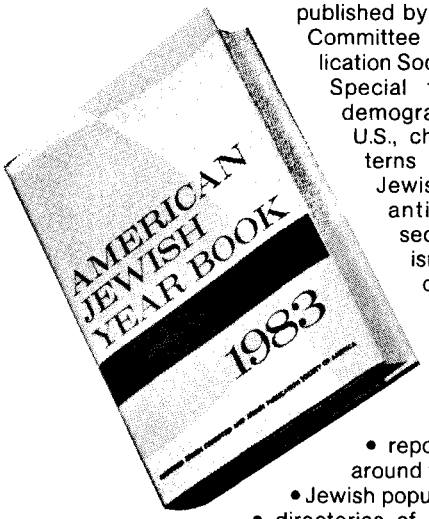
French society, by contrast, permitted no such diversity, which is why the idea of assimilation ran much deeper in France than in America. It was far more difficult (and unusual) to be both French and Jewish in France than it was to be both American and Jewish in the United States. On the practice of Judaism as a religion, however, there were no constraints. The logical conclusion for French Jews was therefore to think of themselves as Frenchmen who adhered to the Jewish religion. To make this clear, they adopted the term "*Israélite*" to describe themselves, a term similar in connotation to the British coinage, "of the Mosaic persuasion." A *Français israélite* was simply a Frenchman who attended *le temple*, just as a *Français catholique* was a Frenchman who went to church.

So eager were French Jews to drive this point home (if only to themselves) that they referred to non-French Jews—like those who had immigrated from Central and Eastern Europe, and particularly from Poland, between the wars—by another name, *Juifs*. *Juifs* were simply Jews, those who still belonged to the Jewish people as it were by default; for, given a choice, would not anyone in his right mind prefer to be a Frenchman?

BUT the ideal of assimilation, in all its rosy promise, was unhinged permanently by the cataclysmic events of World War II and its aftermath. The Holocaust, and the abjectness of French behavior in the course of it, revealed that France was not the special nation of asylum and solidarity that the Jews had taken it to be. Then came the creation of Israel and the shock of the Six-Day war, which demonstrated the tenacious will of the Jewish people to survive, but also its isolation. Until 1967, Israel and France had been close allies. De Gaulle's icy response to the Six-Day war changed all that. He accused Israel of provoking the war, complimented the Jewish people in a way that sounded almost anti-Semitic, and tilted French Middle East policy significantly away from Israel. Over the next few years, French Jews realized that they had to band together for the defense of Israel—which meant, in effect, that they had to act politically for the defense of their identity as Jews. With the help of the new immigrants from North Africa, to whom this came more naturally, French Jews became reacquainted with the centuries-old idea of Jewish peoplehood.

This development, which is of the highest importance with respect to the future of national ideas as a whole, has been brilliantly analyzed by the French sociologist, Dominique Schnapper. Her book, published three years ago in France, has now been issued in an excellent English translation with an introduction by Edward Shils.

Mme. Schnapper's original title,



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Juifs et israélites, reflects her concern with assimilation and its discontents. In a sense, though, the American title, *Jewish Identities in France,* is a more accurate rendition of the aim of the book, which is to describe the burgeoning expression of Jewish identity in France in a post-assimilationist period. That is not to say that French Jews are rejecting assimilation *en masse,* or that they have developed qualms about being French. Neither is true. What they have rejected, however, is the classic assimilationist idea that Jewish identity has to do only with adherence, residual or otherwise, to the Jewish religion.

As Mme. Schnapper shows very convincingly, French Jewry is not exactly in the midst of a religious revival, but it is in the midst of a substantial Jewish revival, as even the most casual observer must note. The distance covered in this regard since the 40's is indicated by the existence, for the first time ever in France, of a quasi-political Jewish movement called *Renouveau juif* (Jewish Renewal); by the support, vocal and otherwise, of the French-Jewish community for Israel; by the number of books appearing on all aspects of Jewish life, thought, and religion; and finally by the belated willingness of non-Jewish French society, for the first time since the end of World War II, to confront the question of national and individual responsibility in the Holocaust. One indication of this last development has been the widespread discussion occasioned in France by the publication of Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus's works on the Vichy period.*

IN FRANCE (as in America), concern for Israel might be said to have supplanted religion as the central bond and focus of Jews, and this will probably continue as long as the state of war in the Middle East persists. Nevertheless, there are also purely religious aspects to the current renewal, though it is sometimes hard to separate them from the national. Mme. Schnapper finds—not too surprisingly—that the most observant Jews in France today come from among the recent immigrants from North Africa (one of whom was chosen recently to serve as the next *Grand Rabbin*), but she also finds a surprising number of "newly practicing Jews" who, by all evidence, are coming to Judaism from the head rather than from the heart. Though their original impulse may have been an emotional one (resulting from a trip to Israel, for example), they have since made a deep intellectual commitment as well. Looking at this as a professional sociologist, Mme. Schnapper writes that an advanced society gives highly trained individuals the opportunity to use their education to fulfill spiritual needs:

> It is easy to understand why the return to Judaism, an intellectual religion, should be so common in a population whose cultural level has always been higher than that of the non-Jewish population and in which respect for study has always been a part of the tradition. Whereas, during the early phase of industrialization in the 19th century, increased education led Jews away from the practice of their religion, today education helps traditional Jews to perpetuate their ritual and newly practicing Jews to find their way back to it.

Many of those who have returned to Judaism, Mme. Schnapper notes, are "disillusioned leftists of the 1968 era" who have given up on the dreams of that period. Whether they come via this or some other route, however, the characteristic note of the current revival is Jewish militancy. It is expressed both through political means (pro-Israel activism, and to a lesser extent community politics) and through religious observance, and frequently, through some combination of the two. As one of Mme. Schnapper's respondents says:

> On *Shabbat* we eat kosher food, we light the candles, we say prayers [yet] . . . I work on Saturday. It's hard to close a pharmacy on Saturday. . . . But in the end I think you make up for all your

* See my review of their *Vichy France and the Jews* in COMMENTARY ("Collaboration Par Excellence," January 1982).

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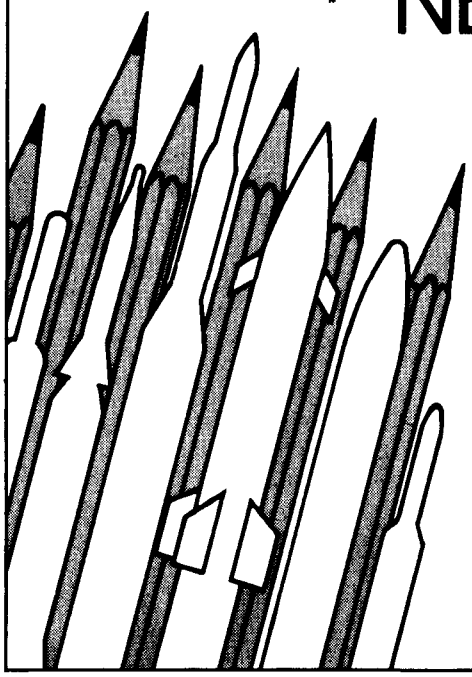

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deficiencies by supporting Israel, by being militant.

"Militant Judaism," writes Mme. Schnapper, "is no doubt the most widespread form of Judaism in France and certainly the most active form." What she has understood is that the catastrophic events of the century, plus the realization that anti-Semitism is today fostered officially by some socialist countries, plus the constant awareness of the danger which Israel faces, have "forced every Jew to look at his own Judaism and at Judaism in general in a political light."

In her "map" of French Jewry Mme. Schnapper does not overlook those Jewish militants who belong to tiny splinters of the far Left, and who are not pro- but anti-Israel. But she does not dwell on this, or on the other pathological forms that "non-Jewish Jews" take. As a group, most French Jews have reaffirmed the idea and the fact of peoplehood. Very few Jews in France still refer to themselves as *Israélites*. And this sense of peoplehood, Mme. Schnapper demonstrates elegantly, is a deep and precious source of Jewish strength and survival.

The Death of Detroit?

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY. By BROCK YATES. *Empire Books. 302 pp. $13.95.*

Reviewed by DON SHARP

WHEN an economic institution so pervasive in our national life as the automobile industry suffers its worst slump in twenty-five years; and when foreign cars, mostly Japanese, come to comprise 30 percent of new-car sales, as they did in 1982, something is afoot that merits the attention of serious analysts. Unfortunately, serious analysts have been little attracted to the automobile industry.

True, John B. Rae (*The Road and the Car in America*, 1971) and James J. Flink (*The Car Culture*, 1975) have rescued the relevant history of the industry from the ghost writers and hagiographers who chronicled the prodigies of Henry Ford, Alfred P. Sloan, *et al.* But the collateral issues have largely remained the province of the nay-sayers and the disaffected who surface when the industry is in dire straits. Kenneth R. Schneider (*Autokind vs. Mankind*, 1971) and Emma Rothschild (*Paradise Lost: The Decline of the Auto-Industrial Age*, 1973) may be counted among the former; John Jerome (once on the editorial staff of *Car and Driver*), with his possibly premature *The Death of the Automobile* (1972), among the latter. All three of these books appeared at the height of the anti-automobile hysteria set off in 1965 by former Senator Abraham Ribicoff and Ralph Nader. Given the recent slump, the time has been auspicious for another attack, and it has been predictably supplied by Brock Yates in *The Decline and Fall of the American Automobile Industry*.

Yates, a contributor to several popular automobile magazines for over twenty years, is most closely associated with *Car and Driver*, and should have some insight into the problems of a behemoth industry mutating into a new age against mixed signals from the market and the government. Unfortunately, he contents himself with repeating the popular fallacy that Detroit cut its own throat by building gas-guzzling cars that nobody wanted, and he offers the simplistic prescription that the domestic industry copy the technical features of the more expensive European cars in order to prosper once again. Since the public demand for gas-guzzlers has never slackened, except briefly in 1974 and 1979, and since technically more sophisticated cars will cost more, Yates's recommendations hardly provide useful guidance.

YATES begins by ascribing the mediocre road performance and desultory market success of the new General Motors J-cars (Chevrolet Cavalier, Oldsmobile Firenza, etc.) to the myopia of the industry that produced them. He portrays Detroit as an isolated village, popu-

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DON SHARP, *a new contributor, is a free-lance writer and the author of a book on owning and operating a car which Houghton-Mifflin will be publishing in January.*

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lated by conceited solipsists whose attention is so fixed on the next rung of the corporate ladder that they cannot design a car the public will buy. Although this view overlooks the several million cars that people do buy every year, it leads Yates in a promising direction: his conclusion, that the industry needs a broader outlook, is certainly true (if not particularly original or profound).

But then everything goes downhill. Yates usefully reminds us of the irrationality of many government regulations, but virtually destroys his own point with the misguided assertion that Detroit could have avoided regulation simply by being more progressive. He thus ignores the public lack of interest in, if not distaste for, Detroit's earlier safety features, such as the padded dashboard and sun visors on the 1952 Oldsmobile, the "deep-dish" steering wheel on the 1956 Ford, and the crash-worthy body of the mid-50's Nash cars. He also ignores the manner in which Senator Ribicoff, apparently hoping to ride to a presidential nomination on Detroit's scarred back, virtually created and vigorously abetted the anti-automotive hysteria of the 1960's. Nothing short of divine intercession would have preserved the industry from the contumely of its critics during that contentious decade.

Other chapters in the book, including one on the ten "best" and "worst" cars, are pastiches of errors of fact, facts misconstrued, and repetitious expositions characterized by inconsistencies that would be maddening if they were taken seriously. To cite but a few examples, Yates praises the disc brakes on the 1949 Chrysler Imperial but does not add that they were seriously flawed and were soon dropped; when Chrysler returned to disc brakes in the 1970's, it used a different system entirely. He reports that the ill-starred Chevrolet Corvair was "driven off the market" in 1965, which only misses by four years: the Corvair was discontinued in the summer of 1969, as *Car and Driver* reported at the time. Throughout the book, Yates accepts the conventional wisdom that Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1965) killed

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the Corvair, but overlooks the more rational explanation that GM itself killed the Corvair to make a place for the equally ill-starred Vega (GM never gave an unequivocal reason for dropping the Corvair). The list could go on and on. Peculiarly, OPEC and the fuel crises get five peripheral mentions, but no chapter of their own.

Besides errors of omission and commission, the conclusions Yates draws from facts vary according to whatever point he happens to be making, without regard to contrary statements a few pages ahead or behind. He lavishly praises the independent rear-suspension system on the more expensive European cars, and more or less declares that the adoption of such systems would rejuvenate the domestic industry. Yet he bestows equally lavish praise on Japanese cars, and on the Ford Escort and Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme (the two best-selling domestic cars in 1982), failing to acknowledge that these do not have independent rear suspensions. Nor does he note that to replicate the suspension system of, say, a Jaguar or BMW would necessarily raise the cost of domestic cars, which he calls "overpriced" in any case. Actually, even this needs some qualification: the base price of a Toyota Cressida is $13,000, that of an Olds Cutlass Supreme $9,000.

General Motors undeniably missed the market with the 1982 J-car (though the 1983 and successor models might reedem the situation). But no one, neither GM nor Yates, knows why it flopped. What would sales of the J-car have been without a recession? Do sales of the Honda Accord prove that it appeals to a white-collar group that is better insulated from recession than the blue-collar buyers who are GM's primary market? Will the popular Accord soon become passé, as did the once-popular Volkswagen Rabbit? If the J-car debacle does reflect the "decline and fall" of an industry (a fall that may be overstated), questions like these deserve consideration.

Furthermore, in a good year such as 1979, GM produces about 5 million cars; by contrast, Toyota produces only about 1 million, and Mercedes-Benz only about 500,000. The sheer magnitude of the Detroit enterprise, not to mention the size of the supporting infrastructure, precludes any quick change in GM's line-up (the J-car was cobbled together from existing components, as was the original Ford Mustang in 1964). By contrast, as small-car sales rose after 1979 (in direct correlation with fuel prices), GM was called upon to change its nature drastically and in a very short time, while the Japanese were not required to do anything differently; they prospered by doing what they had always done. This is not to make excuses, but simply to look more deeply for determining circumstances.

Yates's simplistic view of how the industry failed—presumably by building tasteless gas-guzzlers—also overlooks the importance that he himself elsewhere ascribes to the "image" factor; nor does he pursue this issue into its subtler recesses. For example, do the members of the post-60's "me-generation" buy Perrier water because it fills a practical need? Would the same people buy a Honda Accord if it were made in Detroit? A J-car if it came from overseas? Yates seems to agree with the theory that VW Rabbit sales have declined because the car lost cachet once it began to be built in Pennsylvania. If image means anything near what he claims it does, questions like these need attention. Yates does not even ask them.

WHETHER for reasons of image or for other reasons, the domestic industry certainly saw its sales fall from about 8 million cars in 1979 to about 5 million in 1982, while foreign-car sales climbed from about 20 percent to 30 percent of the domestic market in the same period of time. This may prove that the domestic industry cannot—at least, did not—build a Toyota; it does not prove that Detroit suffers because it built gas-guzzlers that nobody wanted. In fact the demand for gas-guzzlers has remained strong. While *demand* is strong, however, the *supply* of big cars is restricted by the federal edict known as "corporate average fuel economy," or CAFE, which went into effect in 1978.

CAFE stipulates that all the makes and models sold by a given manufacturer must achieve a specified average fuel economy according to EPA estimates. The CAFE figure rises each year; in 1978, it was 18 mpg and by 1985 it will be 27.5 mpg. Thus, at the moment, a buyer who wants a 16-mpg Oldsmobile Toronado must wait until someone else buys a 40-mpg Chevrolet Chevette, in order to keep GM's CAFE average near the current 26+ mpg. If the industry were free to satisfy the demand for gas-guzzlers, overall sales would be much higher. Indeed, the United Automobile Workers might do better to attack CAFE and gratify big-car devotees than to seek import restrictions against the Japanese and anger small-car devotees.

The full economic consequences of CAFE need considerable unraveling, but what can be clearly seen is that the provision virtually mandated sales of Japanese cars. Also, that if Detroit suffered from building gas-guzzlers, it suffered not in the marketplace but in the halls of government. Yates, however, refers to CAFE hardly at all, and does not analyze its effects.

The subject of sales also brings up the issue of market saturation. Once a nation of 225 million people owns 150 million cars, the market is clearly reaching its limits. Furthermore, as this limit has been approached, cars have come to last longer (largely due to greater precision in manufacturing and improved lubricants). For the fifty years from 1930 to 1980, the average age of cars in the national fleet increased from slightly under to slightly over six years. In the past few years, it has climbed to above seven years. Given 150 million cars on the road, even a modest increase in average useful life will eliminate the need for a huge number of new cars as annual replacements. The increase in the average life of cars, in conjunction with a market reaching its limits, does signal major institutional changes in the automobile industry and in the society that uses its products. Yates offers no remarks on the subject.

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The automobile industry and its market are a much more complex phenomenon than is commonly realized, and certainly much more complex than Yates has managed to discover. Just as his book was being published this spring, figures showed domestic car sales running up to 40 percent above those of the same period a year ago. Does this new strength in the industry mean that Yates's *Decline and Fall* will be the J-car of automotive literature? It is, at any rate, a reminder that the automobile industry is too important to be left to journalists.

Dissenter

MEMOIRS. By PETRO G. GRIGORENKO. Translated by Thomas P. Whitney. *Norton. 462 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ADRIAN KARATNYCKY

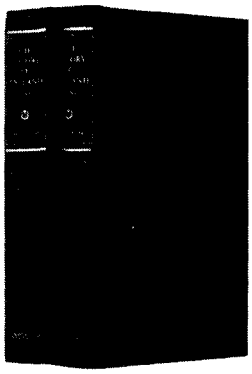
THE memoirs of former Red Army General Petro Grigorenko are a remarkable byproduct of this century's most influential political invention—totalitarianism. They are based on Grigorenko's lifelong relationship with the closed society: first as a loyal and worshipful Stalinist, then as a more skeptical military leader, later as a Leninist critical of the regime, still later as a leading activist in the Soviet human-rights movement, and finally as an exile in the United States, stripped of his citizenship by a vindictive act of the Soviet legislature.

Born in 1907 into a poor Ukrainian peasant family, Grigorenko spent his formative years in the village of Borisovka. Most of the village's young men had gone off to join the Red Army or Nestor Makhno's rag-tag band of anarchists. Communism exerted a strong appeal. As Grigorenko observes, through the Bolshevik leaflets and posters which found their way into town, "the concepts of freedom, brotherhood, and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' entered into my consciousness. . . . I wanted to build a new life, to struggle for the ideas the Communist party and Lenin were bringing into the world."

It was not only the romance of Communism and its promise of a radiant future that won the teenage Grigorenko's loyalty. The revolution provided substantial opportunities for personal advancement. Indeed, as Grigorenko's memoirs remind us, the significant social mobility which resulted from this era of great upheaval was an important reason for the residual loyalties Communism and Stalin were able to claim from many Soviet citizens even after they lost most traces of political commitment or ideological fervor.

As a bright, young, true believer of poor peasant stock, Grigorenko quickly scaled the totalitarian occupational ladder. He was a local leader of the Young Communist League, devoting "every free min-

ADRIAN KARATNYCKY *is research director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and an editor of the quarterly journal,* Workers Under Communism.



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ute to the cell, working, arguing, discussing." He studied construction engineering and eventually opted for a military career. By the early 30's Grigorenko, a commissioned Red Army officer, was well on the way to becoming a successful member of the Soviet establishment.

Already in these early years, Grigorenko was witness to the devastation caused by Stalin's rule. On a furlough in the Ukraine, he observed first-hand the human misery caused by the forced famine of 1932-33 which claimed between 4.5 and 7 million victims. Yet the strength of his commitment was such that he deluded himself into believing that he was viewing isolated instances of local mismanagement. As he notes, "We were deceived because we wanted to be deceived. We believed so strongly in Communism that we were ready to accept any crime if it was glossed over with Communist phraseology. . . ."

During the war, Grigorenko served with distinction on the Ukrainian front, in the Far East, and in the Caucasus. Despite his early doubts about Stalin's wartime leadership, by the end of the conflict Grigorenko was convinced anew of the dictator's military genius. After the war, a much decorated hero, Grigorenko was assigned to duty at the Soviet equivalent of West Point and promoted to the rank of general.

As deputy director of the Scientific Research Section of the Frunze Military Academy, and director of its cybernetics department, Major General Petro Grigorenko occupied an important place in Soviet society. But he did not begin to occupy an indispensable place until September 7, 1961, the day he addressed a Moscow district Communist party conference and condemned Stalin's personality cult, suggested that concrete steps be taken to preclude the dangers of a similar cult unler Khrushchev, argued for the strengthening of internal democratic procedures within the party, and warned of the dangers of bureaucratization.

Grigorenko's account of this pivotal event is filled with a quiet dignity and a populist's strong faith in fundamental human decency:

> I realized that my speech had penetrated the hearts and minds of the listeners. A normal person is quite sensitive to nobility and courage. These were normal people who, though they had party cards in their pockets, had realized that this enormous and cruel machine was going to roll over me and that I was not retreating but instead was standing up firmly for my rights, and by this token for their rights too. Most sympathized with me.

His speech created a sensation within the Moscow political community. Grigorenko was soon thereafter dismissed from the Frunze Military Academy and transferred to duty in the Far East. The open break with the system behind him, his political activism quickened, as did the speed of his descent into hell. He created a small clandestine organization, "The Alliance for Struggle for the Rebirth of Leninism," which circulated *samizdat* political tracts. By 1964 he was arrested, interrogated by then KGB chairman V.E. Semichastny, and examined by KGB psychiatrists, who ruled that he was insane. Released from detention as a result of Khrushchev's fall from power, Grigorenko continued to take an active part in Moscow's burgeoning human-rights movement; this led to renewed arrests and nearly five years of detention in Soviet psychoprisons.

A LIFE as tumultuous and rich as this would in and of itself be of abiding interest. What distinguishes Grigorenko's memoirs are their exceedingly valuable and colorful glimpses into the inner workings of the Soviet establishment and, even more, their deep insights into the totalitarian mind. To judge by his testimony, the closed society is nowhere more closed than in the higher circles of the Soviet hierarchy. Indeed, one of the most frightening aspects of these memoirs is the view they offer of a consciousness—Grigorenko's own—that has been shaped almost entirely by totalitarianism. Grigorenko's intellectual sources are almost exclusively Russian, Ukrainian, or Marxist-Leninist. Invocations of Marx, Bukharin, Lenin, and Stalin abound. By contrast, the only Western writ-

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er cited is Clausewitz, and the only Western figures mentioned at all in the text are Churchill and Roosevelt (in connection with Teheran and Yalta) and Richard Nixon (in connection with his 1974 visit to the Soviet Union). Of some 600 entries in the index, the only other instances of Western influence are references to Radio Liberty, Radio Canada, and the Voice of America.

So total is Grigorenko's immersion in Soviet culture that one finally wonders what there was in his experience that allowed for his break with Soviet reality. How to account for his Pauline conversion? A central role, of course, was played by the effects of totalitarian rule. Even the mind of an important military official cannot perpetually suppress the plentiful evidence of the destructiveness and human degradation caused by the Soviet system. Then, too, in Grigorenko's case, there was his wife Zinaida, who strongly rejected Soviet values —a rejection born of the extermination of two sisters and a brother by Stalin's Leviathan. A final important factor was Grigorenko's national background. As a Ukrainian, the general belongs to a nationality which is regarded by many Russians as somehow second-rate. Moreover, the language taught him in the schools, the language of his professional life, the language in which he issued battle orders, was not the language of his childhood. As a consequence of his background, Grigorenko was ever the minority member, the perennial outsider. There is something particularly moving, even wistful, about Grigorenko's understated evocations of his ethnic roots.

It is this identification with the lot of the outsider that makes Grigorenko unique among Soviet dissidents as a persistent defender of the rights of the small non-Russian nationalities—the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans. And this aspect of Grigorenko's life also points us toward a deep source of discontent in Soviet society. We learn from him of the emergence in the 1960's of a new generation of human-rights activists in the Ukraine, and of the massive protests of Crimean Tatars who in 1967 collected three million signatures on petitions urging their resettlement. These non-Russian nationalities, who by the year 2000 will make up the majority of the USSR's population, constitute a major latent threat to the Soviet empire.

Grigorenko's memoirs end on a note of caution, born of experience. The Soviets, Grigorenko warns,

> are in a state of hostile relations with the entire world. . . . In the beginning they waged war against the old government, then with democracy and the higher classes, then with the prosperous peasants and the organized portion of the working class, then with the entire people of their own country, and finally with the world. The West must never forget the Soviet Union's goal—world domination. It must at all times attempt to pull the teeth from the beast of prey.

Will we heed the old general's words?

Redrawing the Line

CONFESSION OF A CATHOLIC. By MICHAEL NOVAK. *Harper & Row. 221 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM MCGURN

For most of this century, the Roman Catholic Church was regarded as among the most reactionary of American institutions, blindly anti-Communist and a hidebound defender of traditional mores. Discrimination against Catholics at the hands of such nativist groups as the Know Nothings and the Ku Klux Klan seems only to have hardened Catholic patriotism. By the end of the 1950's, many ethnic Catholics had become more American than the Americans, heavily represented in police forces, local and state legislatures, and the armed services. They were also on the verge of what just a few years earlier had seemed impossible: the election of a Catholic President.

In the more than two decades since then, much has changed. For one thing, there is great dissension

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WILLIAM MCGURN, *a new contributor, is assistant managing editor of the American Spectator.*

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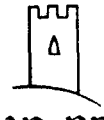

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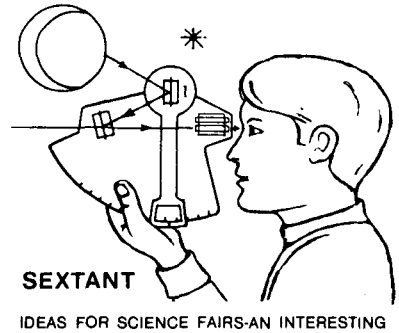

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in the ranks. Over 11,000 priests and 35,000 nuns in the United States have abandoned their religious vows. Attendance at Mass is at a low ebb. Church teachings on sexuality are virtually ignored. In matters of peace and war, the same Church that one generation ago debated seriously the morality of a "preemptive first strike" now has a large sector of its hierarchy in favor of unilateral disarmament and a clergy seemingly ready to endorse any Third World guerrilla movement that calls itself liberationist.

No one has been more acutely aware of, or more involved in, this massive shifting of attitudes than the well-known neoconservative Catholic thinker Michael Novak. As a young man, Novak spent twelve years preparing for the priesthood. Although in the end he declined to be ordained, he has devoted a great deal of his life to writing about the Church, in almost two dozen books and in innumerable articles. These once appeared in such left-leaning periodicals as the *National Catholic Reporter, Commonweal, America,* and *Christianity and Crisis.* Today, however, Michael Novak's name is more likely to turn up in COMMENTARY, the *National Catholic Register,* or the *National Review,* to which he contributes a regular column on religion. He has also been instrumental in the recent launching of two new journals, *This World* and *Catholicism in Crisis,* both decidedly more traditional than his former homes.

What happened is that, like many of his fellow neoconservatives, Novak discovered that his erstwhile colleagues, unable to draw the line between an open Church and a libertine Church, had moved so far Left that he appeared to be on the Right. With *Confession of a Catholic,* his latest book, Novak hopes to redraw the line, to restore the "coherent vision" that was once the badge of the Church.

LESS an autobiography than a personal definition of faith, *Confession* has for its ostensible subject the Nicean Creed: what the Creed says about God, what it says about the Trinity, and what they together imply about our lives in this world. To Novak, religious ideas have consequences no less significant than do secular ones. "I have seen many individual lives ravaged by novel interpretations in faith and morals," he writes.

Echoing Cardinal Newman, Novak emphasizes that the faith embodied in the Creed is one of "real" (i.e., particular), not "notional" (abstract) assents. Indeed, it is by forgetting the realism embodied in the Creed that many of the faithful have lost themselves in the extremes. In the rush to embrace everything and anything "new," a long intellectual tradition that had been tempered by centuries of experience was left behind for vague and abstract concepts.

This turn from analysis to abstraction led to the reemergence of a perennially threatening form of spirituality—gnosticism—which Novak calls the "new idealism." Once practical limits like original sin are forgotten, all sorts of utopian visions pop up:

> When it is no longer channelled within the banks of biblical realism, religion often pours into visionary politics. What believers no longer hope for from God and church, they hope for from political revolution. No longer believing in hell after death, they work for the arrival of hell on earth, as though it were heaven itself.

Thus Archbishop Helder Camara of Brazil urges that the Church replace Aquinas with Marx.

The hallmark of the "new idealism" is rage; against the body, against the earth, against even elementary distinctions like those between man and woman. In the absence of a firm understanding of history and reality, *all* differences appear highly arbitrary and unjust, and the promise of things not seen takes on a new urgency. Injustice and sin, no longer acknowledged as constants in the human soul, are instead located in outside structures. If only we could begin anew, the idealists say, we could erect "sinless structures." One such model in recent years has been Nicaragua under the Sandinistas.

Practically speaking, the fruit of such agitation has been the division of the Church along quasi-political lines. This helps account for the highly charged emotions that characterize the current atmosphere, in which politics has become no longer a matter of reasonable choice but a lining up of moral versus immoral. Needless to say, given the predominance of "new idealists" among Catholic opinion leaders, it is those like Michael Novak who are dubbed immoral. Thus, the Reverend Andrew Greeley has referred to Novak as a "turncoat," and *Commonweal* editor Peter Steinfels, in an unusually vitriolic two-part series, depicted Novak as a sort of anti-Christ. As Novak himself has noted, his critics are most annoyed at his political, not his theological, deviations.

YET *Confession of a Catholic* cannot be understood as a call to return to the status quo ante, to the Church before Vatican Council II. Novak hopes, rather, for a return to the "practical wisdom" of the Church by which he means the sense of realism embodied in the Nicean Creed as he reads it. Emphasizing the classic Augustinian distinction between the City of God and the City of Man, Novak writes that "an institution that has maintained itself intact through the long night of history has given evidence of realism." Any organization that looks clearly at man's nature is bound to be anti-utopian; it is bound to accept humans as humans. In this, Novak argues, lies the only true hope for progress.

"For myself," writes Novak, "the central insight of Catholicism is that God works through humble, much despised ways, fleshly ways, tailored to the sinfulness of us all." In *Confession of a Catholic,* Novak brings this point to life, in a tone remarkably free of rancor or bitterness. To Catholics hungry for meaning this book will come as a great joy; to non-Catholics, who have a considerable stake in what fifty million of their fellow citizens are thinking and being taught, it may help show that things are not quite as lost as they sometimes seem.

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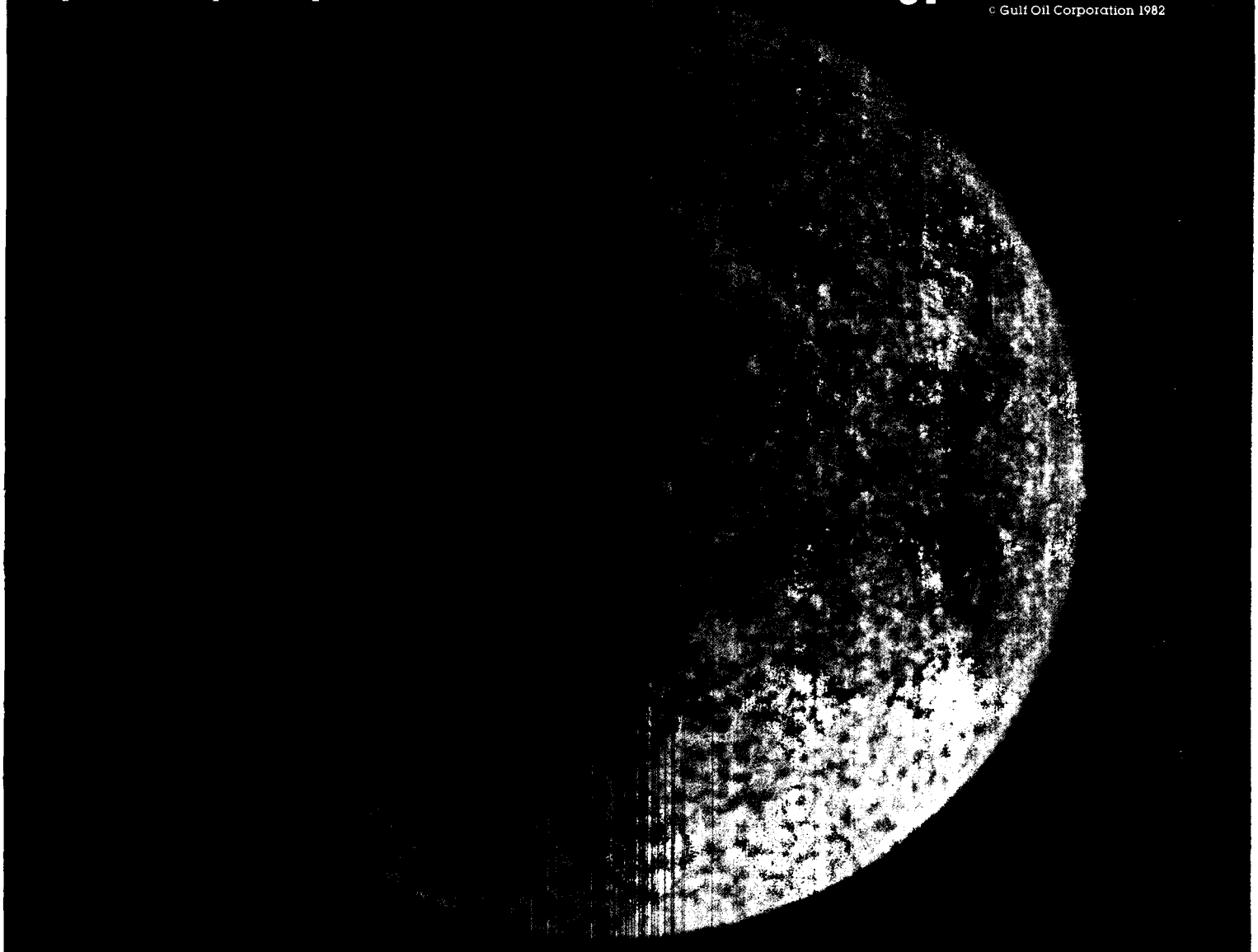

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